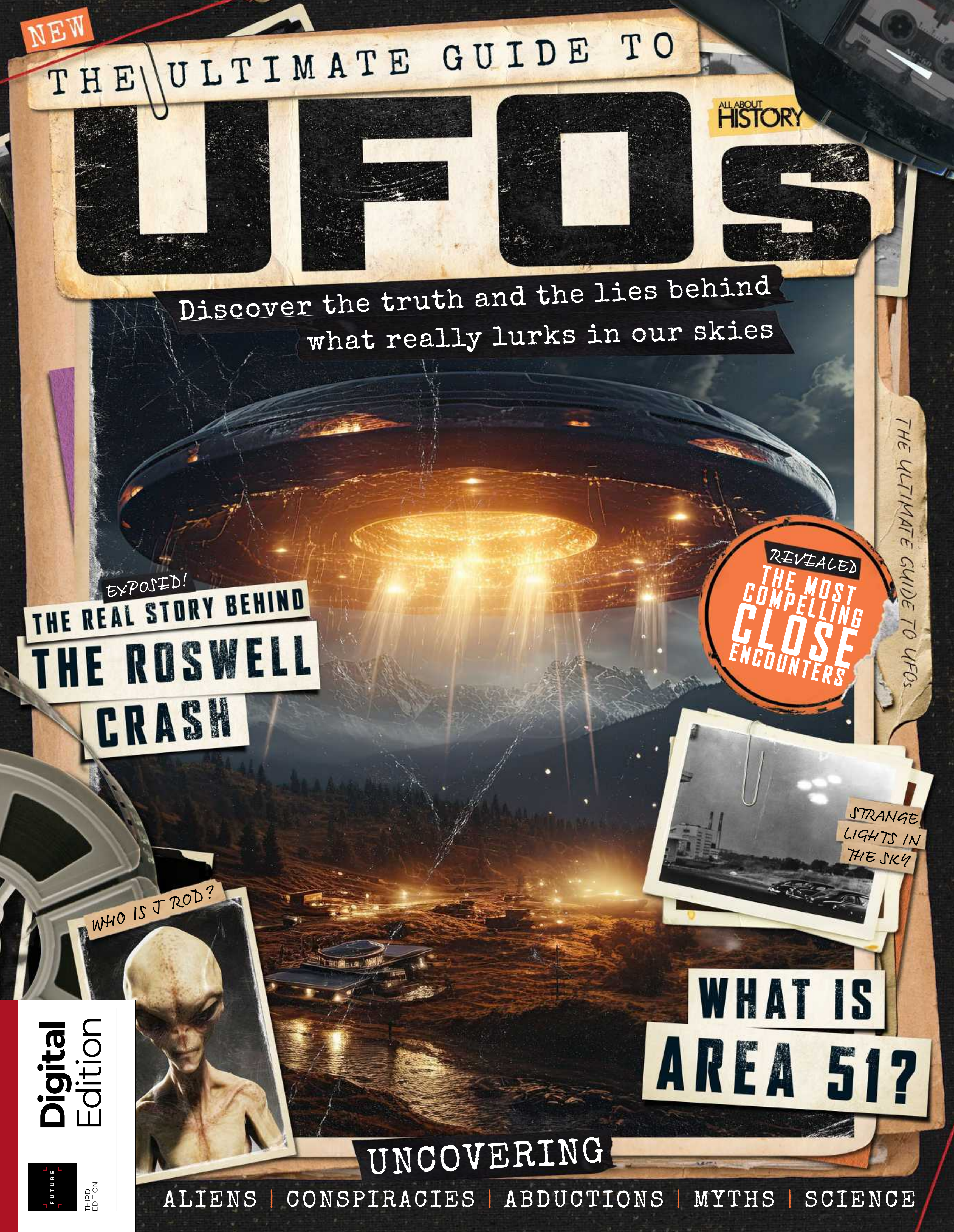
NEW

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO UFOs

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Discover the truth and the lies behind what really lurks in our skies



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO UFOs

EXPOSED!
THE REAL STORY BEHIND THE ROSWELL CRASH

REVEALED
THE MOST COMPELLING CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

STRANGE LIGHTS IN THE SKY

WHO IS J ROD?

WHAT IS AREA 51?

UNCOVERING
ALIENS | CONSPIRACIES | ABDUCTIONS | MYTHS | SCIENCE

Digital Edition
FUTURE
THIRD EDITION

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

UFOs

WELCOME

From mysterious luminous orbs to flying saucers, unidentified flying objects have been witnessed in the sky for centuries. Initially assumed to be religious omens or dieties, today we most often associate them with little green men from another planet. Despite their constant presence in our skies, we are seemingly no closer to learning what these curious aerial entities are – or are we? In the immortal words of the *X-Files*' Fox Mulder "the truth is out there" – delve deep into the science, history and legacy of this ever-endearing phenomena with *The Ultimate Guide To UFOs*. Discover witness reports of UFO sightings, what world governments have been doing to investigate the anomalies in our skies, the conspiracies UFOs have incited, whether or not they are evidence of extraterrestrial contact and the influence out-of-this-world entities command upon modern terrestrial culture.

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THE UNEXPLAINED EXPLAINED

Discover what we mean by **UFOs** and what these **aerial mysteries** might be...

08...UFO types
10...What are UFOs?
18...The science of UFOs

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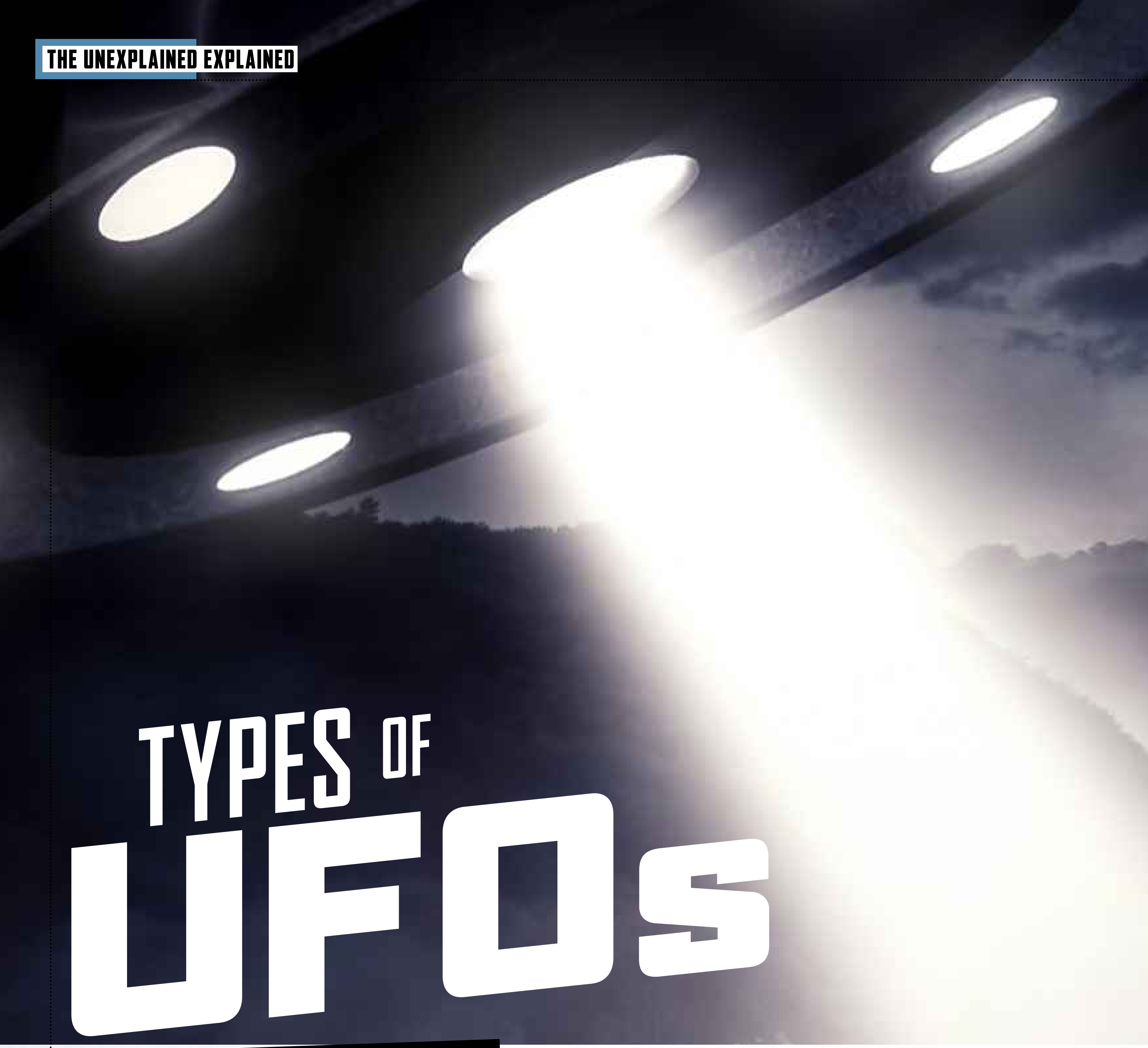


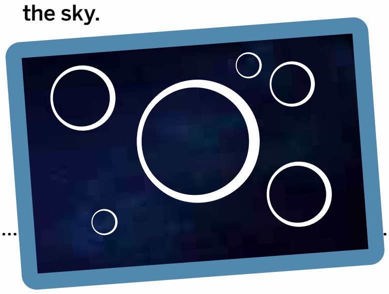
TYPES OF UFOs

From flying saucers to creepy green lights in the sky, UFOs come in all shapes and sizes

The term UFO, meaning Unidentified Flying Object, was coined back in the 1940s at the height of the flying saucer frenzy, but we've been witness to strange phenomena in our skies for millennia and not all of them seem to be alien spaceships. In fact, UFOs come in all shapes and sizes. Here are some of the most common…

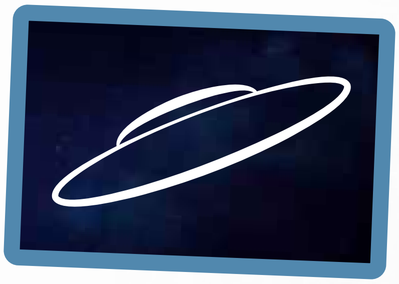
BRIGHT LIGHTS, LUMINOUS BALLS OR GLOWING SPHERES

+ Commonly seen at night, these can appear like a shooting star, a ball of fire, a bright anomalous light or a ghostly orb. They can also make up a light formation, often creating a boomerang or triangular shape in the sky.



CLASSIC FLYING DISCS OR SAUCERS

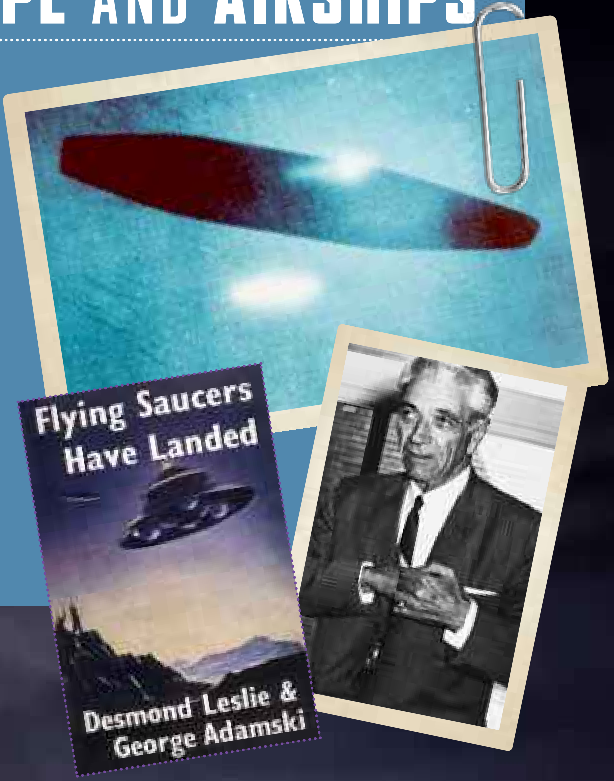
+ Like a dinner plate or doughnut, flying saucers are the most iconic UFO, but there are many variations of this shape, from a conical hat to something that looks like Saturn.



THE ADAMSKI-TYPE AND AIRSHIPS

+ UFO enthusiast, writer and photographer, George Adamski, claimed to have witnessed numerous UFOs during the 1940s and even came into direct contact with a Nordic alien.

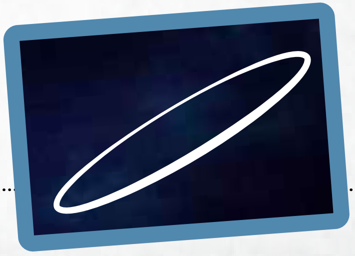
Adamski described the first UFO he claimed to have seen in October 1946 as similar to an airship in appearance, commenting it was "a large black object, similar in shape to a gigantic dirigible, and apparently motionless". In 1952, he shared a photograph he took at Palomar Gardens in California, claiming it was an alien spacecraft. The photo shows what looks like a disc-shaped UFO with three lights (presumably to beam up abductees) or exhausts beneath it, and what appears to be an observation deck with portholes on top. This became known as the 'Adamski-type UFO', but many believe the photo to be a hoax.

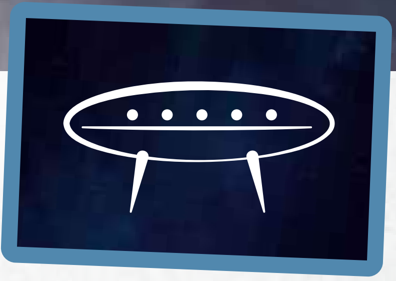

Flying Saucers Have Landed
Desmond Leslie & George Adamski

> "George Adamski claimed to have witnessed numerous UFOs during the 1940s and even came into direct contact with a Nordic alien"

CIGAR OR TORPEDO-SHAPED

+ These flat, elongated flying objects are sometimes described as pancake-shaped and have been assumed to be 'probes' sent from a larger extraterrestrial 'parent' spacecraft. In 2017, scientists witnessed a cigar-shaped interstellar object flying through the galaxy and dubbed it 'Oumuamua'.



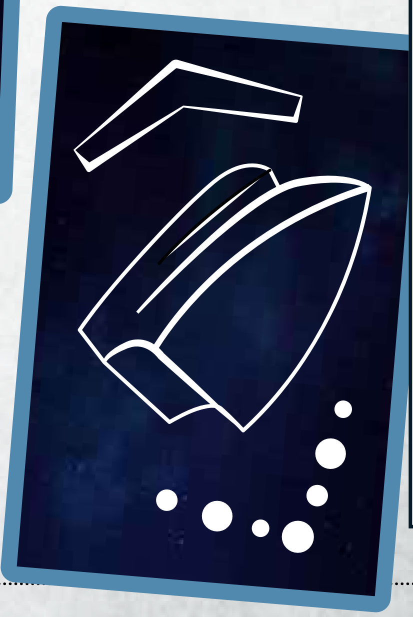


OVOID OR EGG-SHAPED

+ Appearing like an egg laid on its side, some ovoid UFOs have feet to aid them in landing.

OTHER SHAPES

+ Boomerangs, stars, crosses and even a gigantic household steam iron are all UFO shapes reported by witnesses.

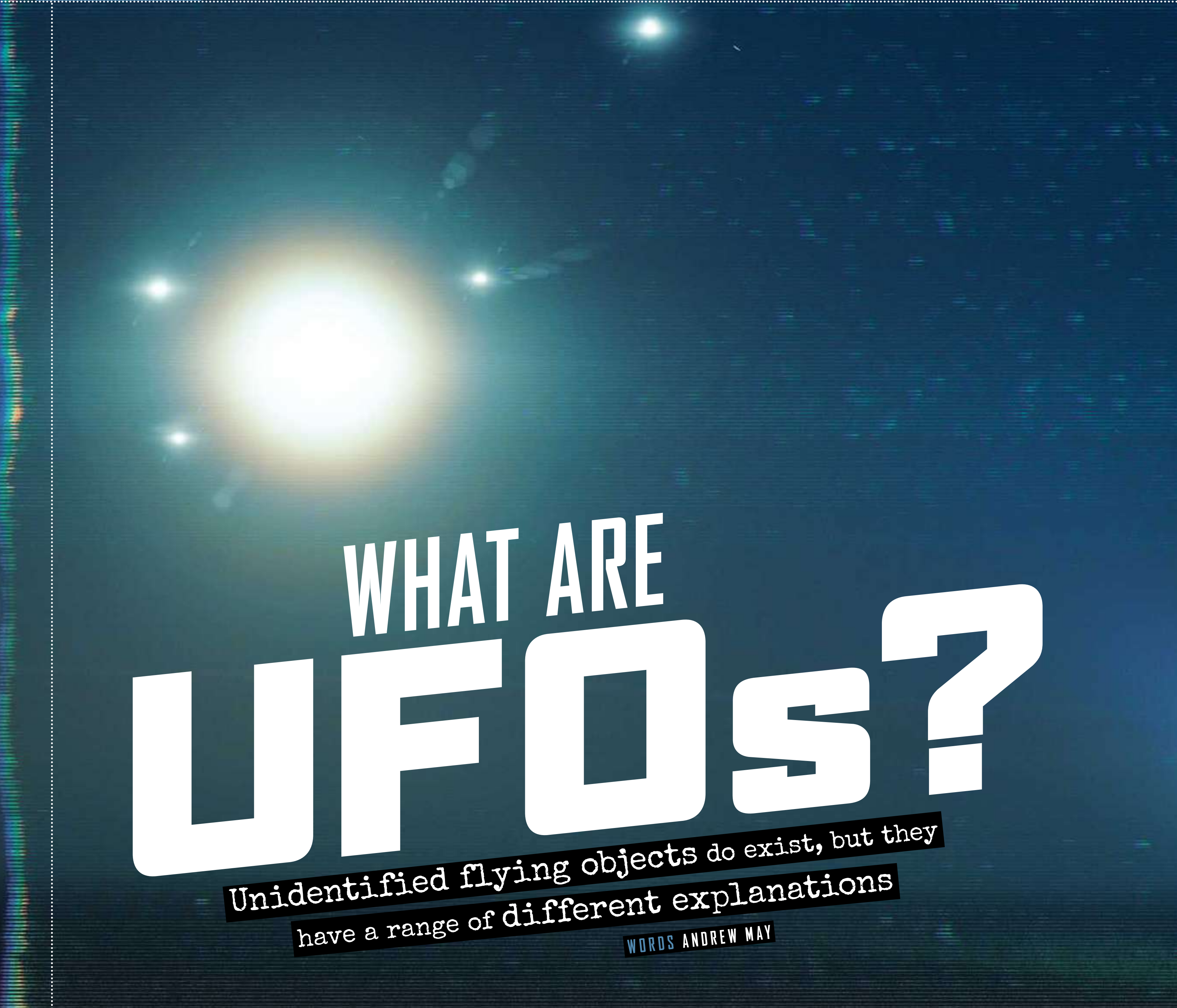


KNOW YOUR UFO LINGO!

Learn ufology's terminology

ALIEN	Any life not of this Earth.
CLOSE ENCOUNTER	Contact with a UFO (See page 76).
EXTRATERRESTRIAL	Anything that doesn't originate from planet Earth.
FLYING SAUCER	Another colloquial term for UFO, first used by Kenneth Arnold when he witnessed a UFO in 1949.
HUMANOID	A creature who resembles a human being.
TERRESTRIAL	Anything that originates from planet Earth.
UAP	The shortened form of Unidentified Aerial Phenomenon, this term has been adopted by both ufologists and officials.
UFO	Stands for Unidentified Flying Object, the term UFO was adopted by the United States Air Force in the 1950s but has since gone on to become synonymous with alien spacecrafts.
UFOLOGY	The study of UFOs.
UFOLOGIST	A person who studies UFOs.
UFONAUT	An alien who is part of a crew who pilots a UFO.
RADAR	A device that detects objects using radio waves.

© Getty; Alamy



WHAT ARE UFOs?

Unidentified flying objects do exist, but they have a range of different explanations

WORDS ANDREW MAY

There have been sightings of strange things in the sky since ancient times, but it was only in the middle of the 20th century that they acquired the name 'unidentified flying object', or UFO. During the 1940s and 1950s, there was a huge surge in sightings around the world, often described as disc-shaped craft or 'flying saucers'. The timing of this first great UFO wave was significant, coming at a period of widespread public paranoia caused by the nuclear arms race. The most common theory in the early days was that UFOs were advanced military aircraft that had been developed in total secrecy.

Within a few years public perceptions changed, thanks in part to Hollywood. Suddenly UFOs were no longer assumed to originate on Earth, but from another planet. Since then, the situation has been complicated by other alleged evidence for extraterrestrial visitation, from rumours that governments are concealing information about dealings with UFO occupants, to 'memories' of alien abduction recalled under hypnosis. Although these cases have little or no direct connection to strange objects seen in the sky, the term 'UFO' still tends to be applied to them. Not too long ago, for example, a UK newspaper carried the headline

'UFO hunter spots alien lizard on Mars', even though no flying object was involved.

The fact is that the terminology has become hopelessly confused. To some people, particularly in official circles, 'unidentified flying object' means just that: an airborne object that hasn't been identified. To many ordinary people, however, UFO means 'alien spacecraft'. For this reason, the US military has started using the term UAP, for unidentified aerial phenomena, to avoid appearing to talk about extraterrestrials every time they say they've seen something they can't explain. And UAP has another advantage, because UFOs may not always be literal 'flying objects'. As you'll see, some may be mirages, unusual weather effects or even astronomical bodies. Therefore 'aerial phenomena' is a much more appropriate term in these cases.

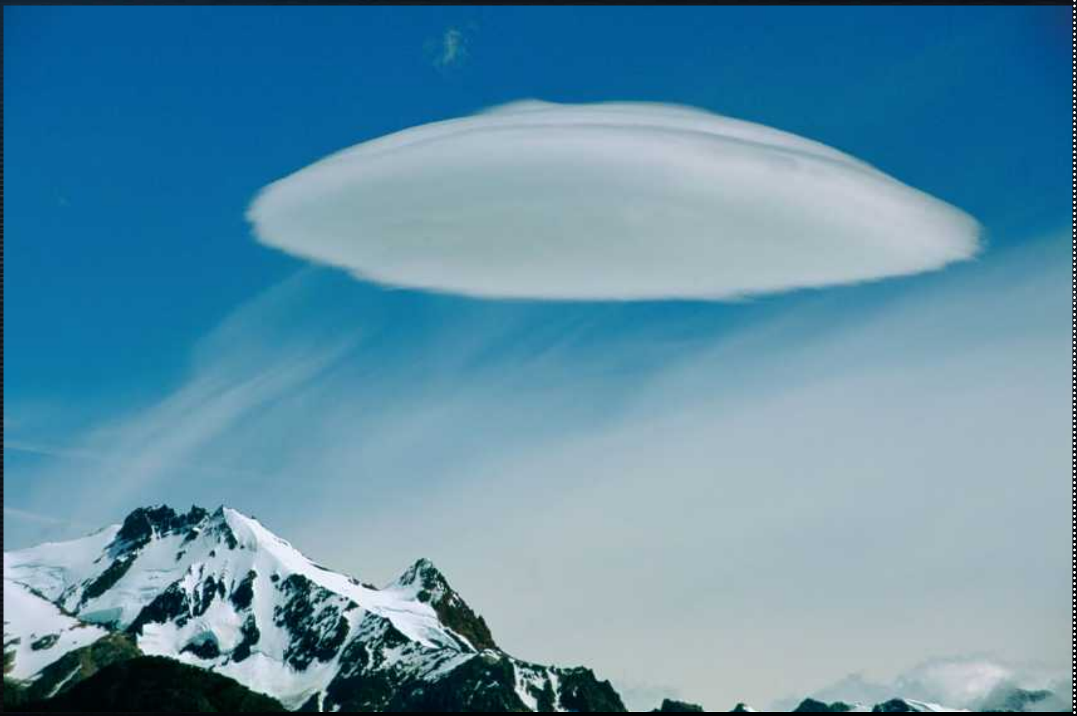
UFO and UAP do have one letter in common, though, and that's U, for unidentified. But it's important not to read too much into this. It doesn't automatically mean that what's been spotted came from another planet, or defies the known laws of physics. In the case of a photograph or video, for example, the resolution simply may not be good enough to work out what it shows.

With a fleeting eyewitness report, even one that comes from a trained observer like a pilot or police officer, if they had no firm idea of the size or distance of the object, it might have been anything from a person's drone to an alien starship. And electronic systems, such as radar, are designed to pick up particular types of known objects, so anything falling outside the expected parameters is likely to be classed as 'unidentified'. A proportion of UFO reports still remain unexplained – but not necessarily extraterrestrial – even after careful investigation.

The majority of sightings can eventually be ascribed to known causes – anything from top-secret spy planes to obscure atmospheric phenomena. We'll take a look at some of these 'real-world UFOs' here, as well as questioning one of the people behind the public release of half a century's worth of Ministry of Defence (MoD) UFO files.

Right: In common usage, UFO means alien spaceship, but there are many other explanations

Below: Cloud phenomena are responsible for some sightings



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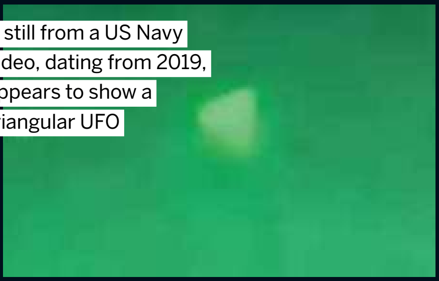
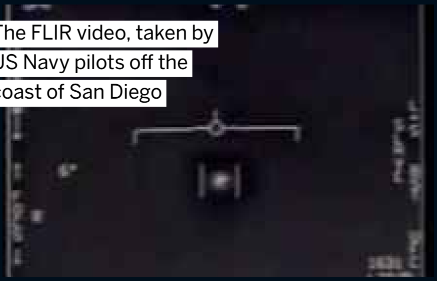
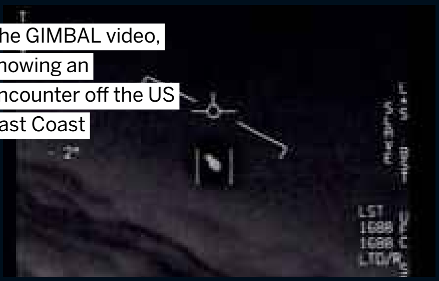
THE PENTAGON UFO VIDEOS

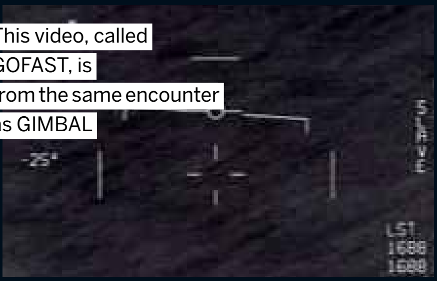
+ The idea that some UFO sightings might represent genuinely unknown phenomena was given a boost in 2020 when the Pentagon – the US defence headquarters – released three videos staff admitted couldn't be explained. The low-resolution, black-and-white videos show the instrument displays inside US Navy fighter jets, recorded during encounters that baffled flight crews at the time. The first video, entitled 'FLIR' – for Forward-Looking Infrared, a reference to the equipment used to capture the video – dates from 2004, while two others, called 'GIMBAL' and 'GOFAST', come from 2015. The latter are more dramatic, with the 'UFO' apparently in rapid motion and the crew's surprised reactions audible in the background.

Despite the Pentagon's inability to explain the videos, theories have been put forward by the public, ranging from optical illusions and instrument malfunctions to unusual atmospheric phenomena and – of course – alien spacecraft.

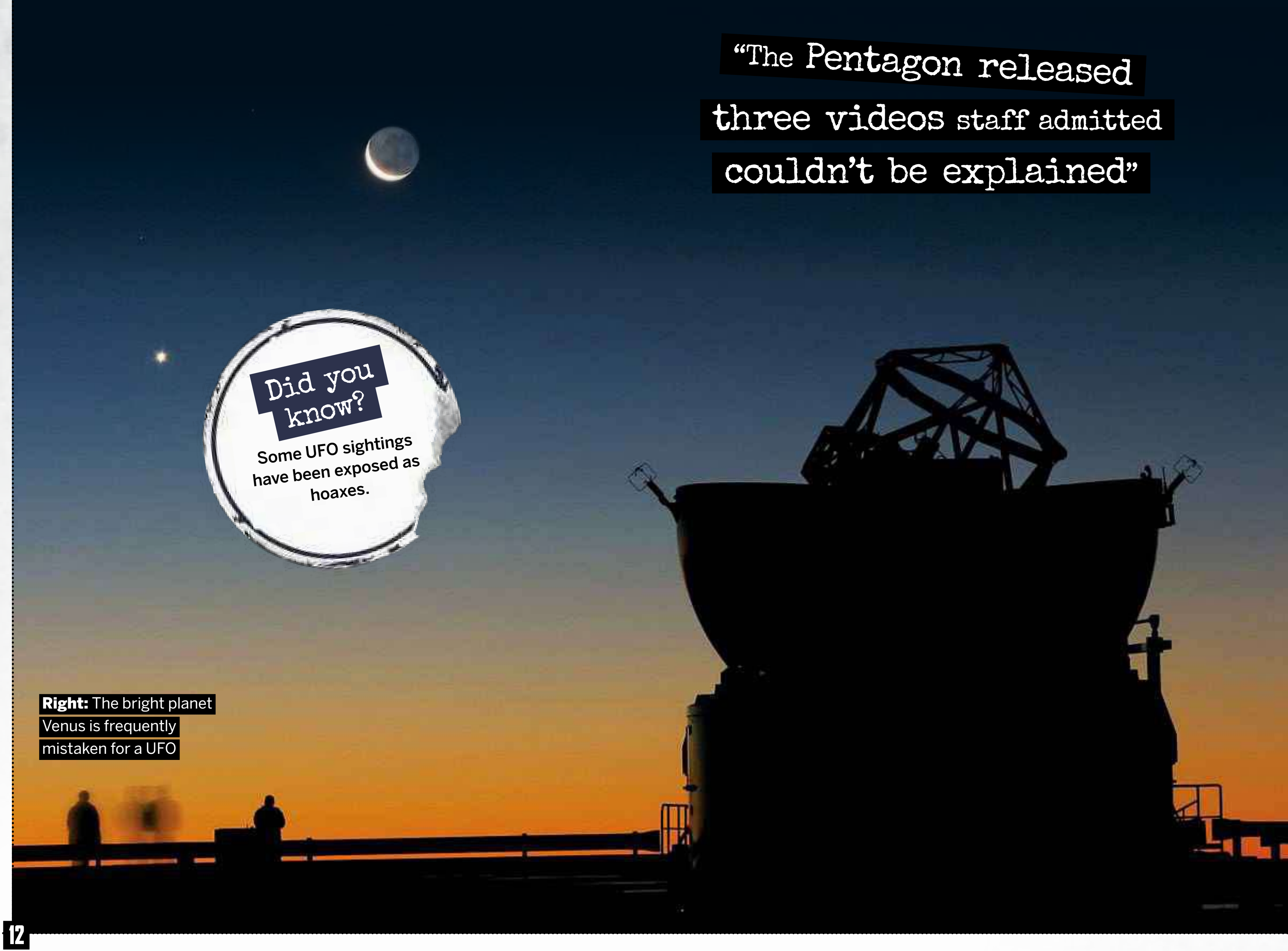

A still from a US Navy video, dating from 2019, appears to show a triangular UFO


The FLIR video, taken by US Navy pilots off the coast of San Diego


The GIMBAL video, showing an encounter off the US East Coast


This video, called GOFAST, is from the same encounter as GIMBAL

> "The Pentagon released three videos staff admitted couldn't be explained"



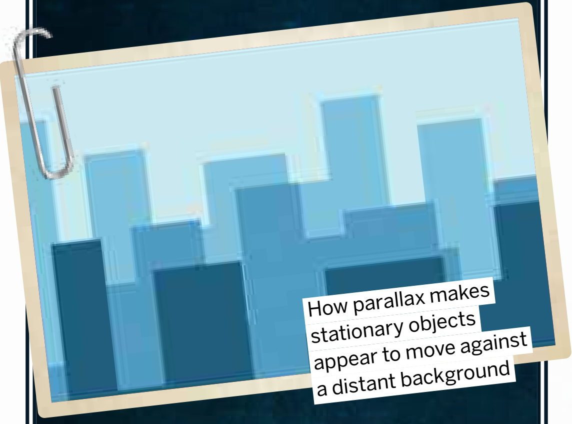
Did you know?

Some UFO sightings have been exposed as hoaxes.

Right: The bright planet Venus is frequently mistaken for a UFO

PARALLAX ILLUSION

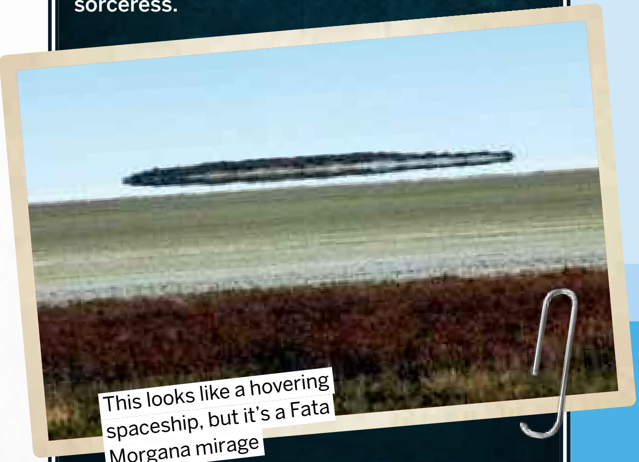
+ If you walk past a stationary object, it appears to move relative to the background. This effect is called parallax, and our brains are so used to it we don't notice when everyday objects are involved. But if there aren't any familiar visual cues, it really can seem as though a stationary object is in motion. Some believe this is what we're seeing in the GOFAST video. The idea is that the object is nowhere near the sea's surface, but much closer to the aircraft taking the video. Even if the object was almost stationary, it would appear to whiz over the sea at the same speed as the aircraft itself.



How parallax makes stationary objects appear to move against a distant background

GRAVITY-DEFYING MIRAGES

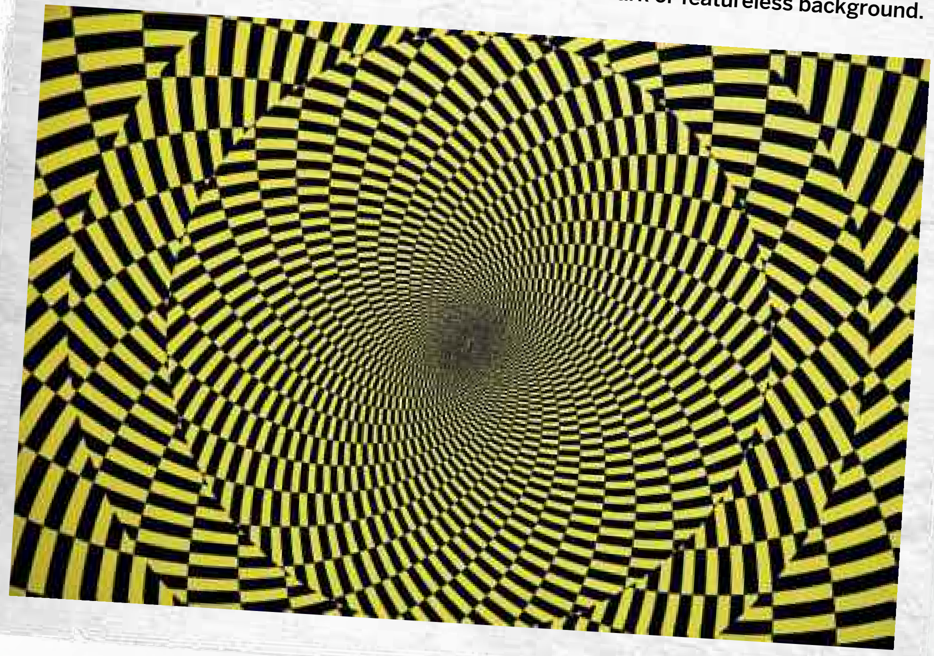
+ In certain weather, particularly over the sea or flat terrain, it's possible to see distant objects 'hovering' in midair. Sometimes it's obvious that what you're seeing is a building or a ship, but other times it can look like a UFO. But this has a perfectly rational explanation in terms of optics. It all comes down to the fact that light doesn't always travel in straight lines. In medieval times people thought mirages were created by supernatural means, dubbing them Fata Morgana after a mythical sorceress.



This looks like a hovering spaceship, but it's a Fata Morgana mirage

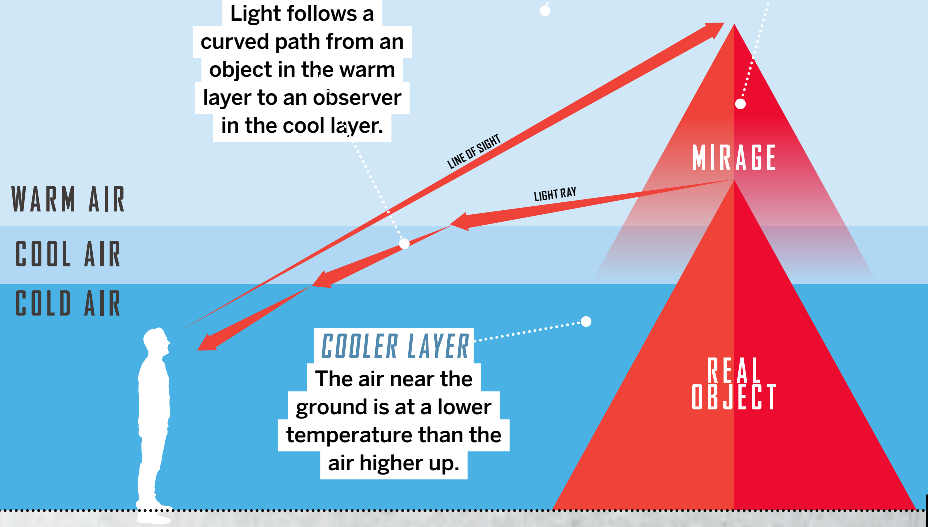
THE AUTOKINETIC EFFECT

+ Over the years, a large number of UFO sightings have been found to be misidentifications of the planet Venus. In these cases, the location of the object in the sky, as described by the witness, exactly matched the known position of Venus at that time. An apparent discrepancy arises if the witness says the UFO was 'moving', because the actual motion of the planet would be so small as to be unnoticeable. But this can be explained in terms of the autokinetic effect – a well-studied quirk of human perception in which a stationary point appears to move around when seen against a dark or featureless background.



FATA MORGANA EXPLAINED

Our brains assume light rays travel in straight lines, but that's not always the case



WARMER LAYER
When a light ray travels between layers of air at different temperatures, it bends.

MIRAGE
The observer assumes the light from the object has travelled in a straight line, so sees it higher up.

LIGHT RAY
Light follows a curved path from an object in the warm layer to an observer in the cool layer.

COOLER LAYER
The air near the ground is at a lower temperature than the air higher up.

© Alamy / Getty / European Southern Observatory / Wiki: NuclearDuckie

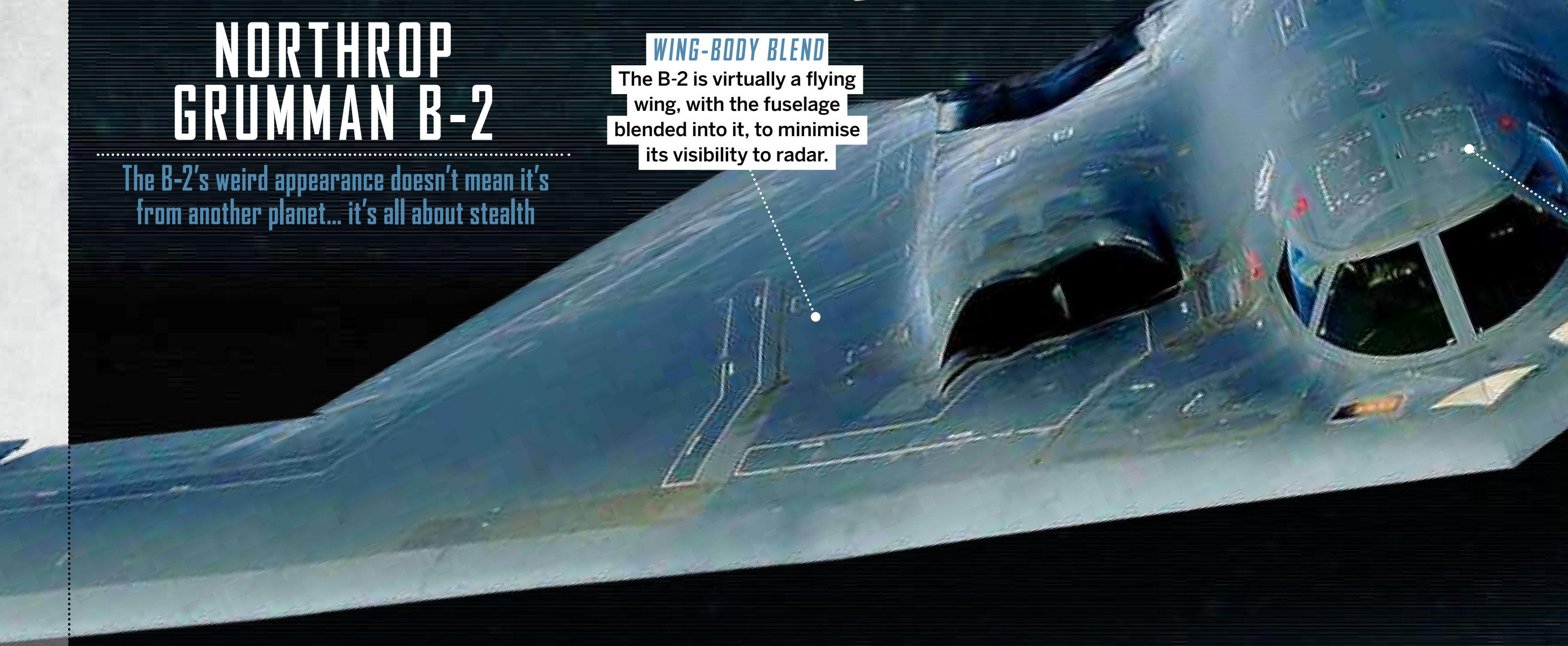
TOP-SECRET AIRCRAFT

+ Many UFOs aren't 'flying objects' at all, but planets, mirages or unusual atmospheric phenomena. On the other hand, some are exactly what they appear to be – ultra-futuristic flying machines – except they originate here on Earth, not in outer space. The CIA estimates that more than half of all UFOs reported in the US during the 1950s and 1960s were the nation's own spy planes. The very existence of these aircraft was a carefully guarded state secret, and the military much preferred the public to speculate about aliens than to uncover the true facts. A new twist was added in the 1970s with the advent of stealth aircraft, such as the F-117, and later the B-2. During their development and initial deployment, these were every bit as secret as the earlier spy planes, while the requirement to disrupt incoming radar signals made them the most oddly-shaped aircraft in the sky.

Below: The B-2 stealth bomber looks like alien tech from certain angles

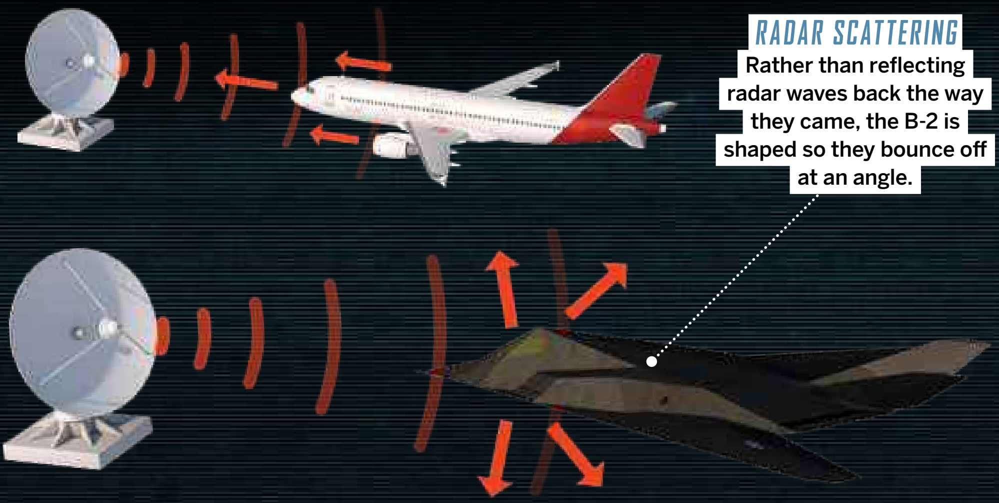
NORTHROP GRUMMAN B-2

The B-2's weird appearance doesn't mean it's from another planet... it's all about stealth



WING-BODY BLEND

The B-2 is virtually a flying wing, with the fuselage blended into it, to minimise its visibility to radar.



RADAR SCATTERING

Rather than reflecting radar waves back the way they came, the B-2 is shaped so they bounce off at an angle.

LOCKHEED F-117 NIGHTHAWK 1983

+ Designed for stealth, the F-117 was developed – and initially operated – in secret. Its existence was revealed in 1988, five years after it entered service with the US Air Force. The combination of secrecy and an unconventional appearance were guaranteed to produce UFO reports.

COOL EXHAUST

The engine nozzles are designed to reduce the exhaust temperature in a way that minimises infrared emissions.

RADAR-ABSORBENT COATING

To further reduce radar returns, the aircraft is covered in specially absorbent material.

ROUNDED SHAPE

None of the B-2's surfaces are completely flat, because these would act like a reflective mirror to radar.

Did you know?

During WWII, Allied pilots referred to UFOs as foo fighters.

Right: Even a hobbyist's drone can be mistaken for a UFO, especially if seen at night

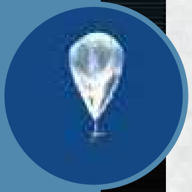
Above: A SpaceX launch in 2017 put on a spectacular show that triggered numerous UFO reports

IDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

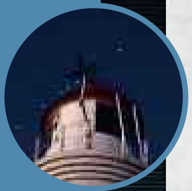
+ If it catches the Sun as it passes overhead just after sunset or before sunrise, the fast ISS can be a puzzling sight to anyone not expecting it.

WEATHER BALLOONS



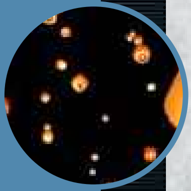
+ Around the world, thousands of high-altitude balloons are launched every day to gather data for weather forecasters. Their appearance and behaviour can seem mysterious to anyone unfamiliar with them.

SATELLITE LAUNCHES

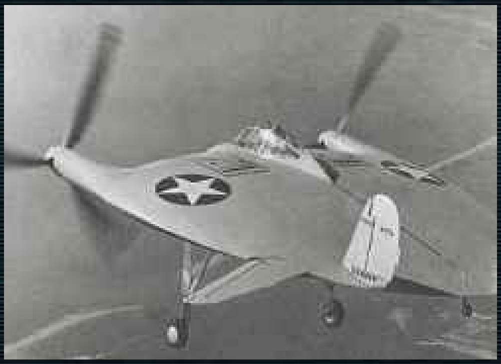


+ With the new generation of broadband satellites, such as Starlink, being launched in batches, the tightly clustered satellites seen just after launch are often mistaken for UFOs.

SKY LANTERNS

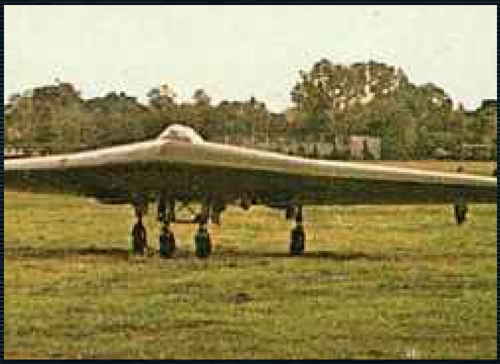


+ The craze for these celebratory paper balloons, illuminated by candles and launched en masse, began in China, but is now worldwide. They've become a common cause of UFO sightings.



VOUGHT V-173 'FLYING PANCAKE' 1942

+ This weird experimental aircraft was built for the US Navy at the start of World War II. A classic 'flying saucer' shape with an almost-circular disc-shaped wing, it underwent almost 200 test flights in the Connecticut area, prompting numerous UFO reports from locals.



HORTEN HO 229 FLYING WING 1944

+ An aircraft way ahead of its time, this jet-powered flying wing superficially resembles the Northrop Grumman B-2 built over 40 years later. The Ho 229 was built by Nazi Germany for a last-ditch offensive against the Allies, but the war ended before it could enter service.

© Alamy / Getty / NASA

ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA

Unusual cloud formations, such as these lenticular clouds, may cause some UFO sightings

+ Earth's atmosphere is a dynamic, constantly changing environment, and some of the more spectacular effects that occur in it can look like UFOs to the uninitiated. These include the unusual weather phenomena described in the graphics here, such as ball lightning, fallstreak holes and lenticular clouds. The latter in particular are a perennial cause of UFO sightings due to their highly symmetrical and structured appearance.

In a single month in 2015, the *Houston Chronicle* reported dozens of these false alarms, quoting one excited Twitter user as saying: "The sky over Texas appears to be filled with UFOs!".

Meteors are another natural phenomenon that can be mistaken for UFOs. These really do come from space, although they're just dust or small pieces of rock rather than alien spacecraft. They produce a glowing trail as they enter the atmosphere, and larger ones may explode on the way down – sometimes audibly – creating a spectacular light show that is almost guaranteed to generate UFO reports. Similar effects can be produced by human-made space junk, such as derelict satellites, as they re-enter the atmosphere.

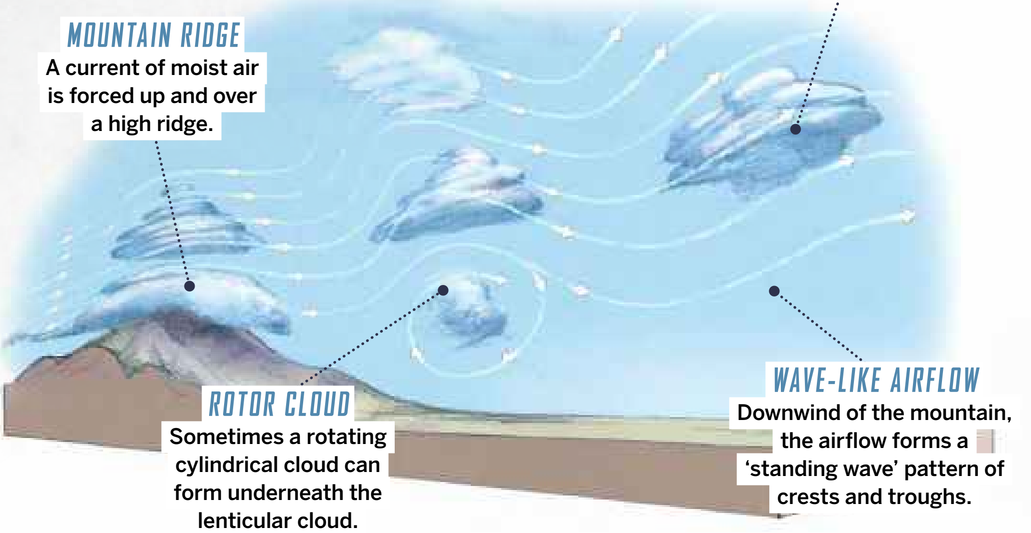
Did you know?

About 48 tonnes worth of meteors hit Earth every day.

> "There are almost as many explanations as there are sightings"

LENTICULAR CLOUDS

These strikingly dramatic clouds can often look like giant flying saucers



MOUNTAIN RIDGE
A current of moist air is forced up and over a high ridge.

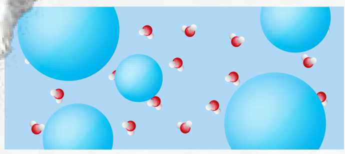
LENTICULAR CLOUDS
The characteristic saucer-shaped clouds form at the peak of the standing wave, constantly replenished by incoming moist air.

ROTOR CLOUD
Sometimes a rotating cylindrical cloud can form underneath the lenticular cloud.

WAVE-LIKE AIRFLOW
Downwind of the mountain, the airflow forms a 'standing wave' pattern of crests and troughs.

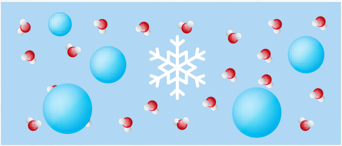
FALLSTREAK CLOUDS

This odd phenomenon causes a circular hole to appear in an otherwise normal cloud layer



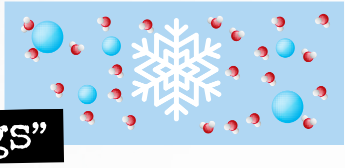
SUPERCOOLED CLOUD

Temperatures are below freezing, but the water droplets remain liquid due to a lack of ice nucleation particles.



CLOUD FREEZES

When ice crystals start to form, they set off a domino effect in which more and more water becomes frozen.

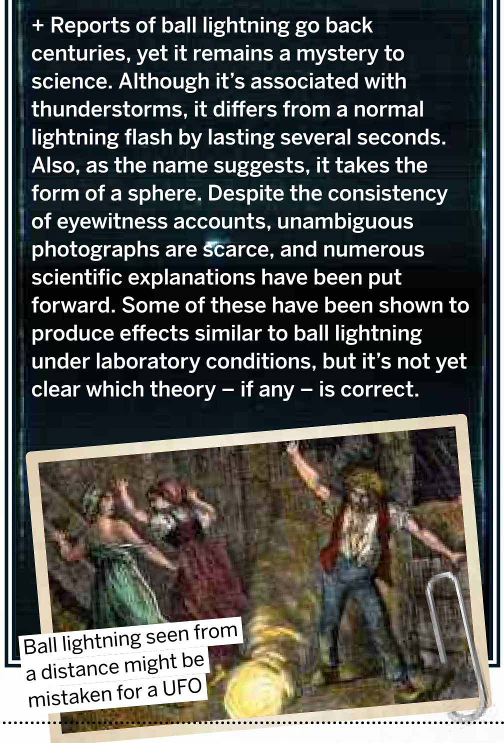


A HOLE IS CREATED

When the ice crystals are big enough, they begin to fall as snow, leaving a big hole in the cloud.

BALL LIGHTNING

+ Reports of ball lightning go back centuries, yet it remains a mystery to science. Although it's associated with thunderstorms, it differs from a normal lightning flash by lasting several seconds. Also, as the name suggests, it takes the form of a sphere. Despite the consistency of eyewitness accounts, unambiguous photographs are scarce, and numerous scientific explanations have been put forward. Some of these have been shown to produce effects similar to ball lightning under laboratory conditions, but it's not yet clear which theory – if any – is correct.



Ball lightning seen from a distance might be mistaken for a UFO

Bright meteors can be mistaken for UFOs by anyone unfamiliar with the night sky

WHAT ELSE [redacted] MIGHT UFOS BE?

+ Although the majority of UFOs can eventually be explained in terms of known objects or phenomena, this doesn't mean they all can. And alien spacecraft aren't the only possibilities. A British government report in December 2000 concluded that some UFOs might be plasma phenomena in the Earth's atmosphere not fully understood by current science. Even more extreme is the suggestion that UFOs are incursions from other realities or dimensions existing alongside our own.

Circular fallstreak clouds can appear UFO-like in some circumstances

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND UFOS

Since 2008, David Clarke has worked with the National Archives on releasing MoD UFO files

Dr David Clarke is an associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University

+ Could you give us a quick idea of what the files contain?
There are two sets of files. The first are paper ones transferred to the National Archives under the old 30-year rule. These cover roughly 1950 to 1984, but are very patchy because many earlier records were destroyed. The second set are from 1984 until 2009, when the MoD closed its public UFO desk. Both sets consist of UFO policy, sighting reports and public and parliamentary correspondence.

+ Looking at the sightings reported by the public, do some of them have obvious explanations?
The vast majority of the 12,000 sightings logged by the MoD have down-to-earth explanations, but some remain unexplained. The truth is they never had resources to do more than a few basic checks on reports, and very few were investigated properly. There are almost as many explanations as there are sightings – everything from paper lanterns to bright planets and space debris. The MoD received 750 reports in 1978, one of the largest totals – this was the same year Spielberg's film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was released!

+ Can you give a couple of examples of sightings that are harder to explain?
One of the most puzzling is the Calvine incident from 1990. Two men saw a large diamond-shaped object hovering above moorland in Scotland and took six photographs. They show the UFO being shadowed by what appears to be an RAF Harrier. But the image in the files is a poor-quality copy. The case was investigated by MoD intelligence, but there's little in the files that reveals the results. The most famous incident in the files is the Rendlesham Forest encounter in Suffolk in 1980. Both cases provide examples of the limitations of these records in that sensitive information has been removed and in some cases destroyed.

Did you know?

US Air Force captain, Edward J Ruppelt, claimed to have coined the acronym UFO in a 1956 report, as a replacement for the term 'flying saucer'. However, the phrase appeared in the title of another report released in 1949.

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THE SCIENCE OF UFOs

Unidentified flying objects may seem the stuff of Hollywood movies, but their existence might not be as far-fetched as you think…

WORDS **COLIN STUART**

It's 2007 and a group of three friends from Cardiff are on a camping trip. By the time they return home they will claim to have been deprived of their tent, their car and even their dog. The culprit, they say, is a fleet of a dozen 'spaceships' that descended before absconding with their property.

Their story is just one of the many accounts of unidentified flying objects (UFOs) logged by the UK Ministry of Defence's (MoD) UFO desk. There are tales of turquoise shapes filled with star-like lights, silver flying saucers and silent, rapidly moving black discs.

The UK isn't alone in reporting such phenomena. US Air Force scheme, Project Blue Book, catalogued many UFO reports between 1947 and 1969. The FBI's Record Vault is full of reported sightings. Over the years reports have come in from every inhabited continent. Yet the MoD saw fit to shut down its UFO desk in 2009, despite receiving 643 reports that year – the second highest haul ever. At the time an RAF spokesperson said nothing had been seen "to suggest an extraterrestrial presence". Their resources were better focused elsewhere.

Nick Pope used to run the desk. "Around 80 percent of sightings could be explained as a misidentification of something ordinary: aircraft lights, satellites, airships, weather balloons or planets," he says. Of the remainder, 15 percent had insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions. But five percent of sightings seemed to defy conventional explanation. Does that make Pope a believer in visitations from extraterrestrials? "I certainly can't rule out the possibility," he says.

So could galaxy-touring alien life forms be an explanation? Perhaps a better question is whether aliens are likely to exist at all.

WATER WORLD

So far, ours is the only planet that we are certain hosts life. Wherever we look on Earth we find life thriving, even in the most extreme environments. The common denominator is water, which we have because of our favourable location in the solar system. We aren't nestled so close to the Sun that water boils away, nor do we orbit so far away that it freezes. Astronomers call this cosy region around a star where the temperature permits liquid water the habitable zone (or sometimes the Goldilocks Zone – because the temperature is 'just right').

The search for similar water worlds around other stars is well underway. To date, thousands of planets beyond our own solar system have been located. Most of them aren't watery worlds in the habitable zone, but we can use what we have discovered so far to estimate the potential bounty of Earth-like planets out there.

"In our Milky Way galaxy there are likely tens of billions of planets roughly the size and temperature of the Earth," says Geoff Marcy, from the University of California at Berkeley. Marcy has used data from the Kepler space telescope in order to estimate that 22 percent of Sun-like stars in the Milky Way have Earth-sized planets orbiting in the habitable zone.

So the idea of planets elsewhere in our galaxy harbouring life isn't an unreasonable one. On some of them, life may have even developed intelligence and the ability to exploit technology. However, the galaxy is an enormous place. With so many destinations to choose from, a star-trekking alien race might want to limit its travels to places of that are of guaranteed interest. Would it be possible to know Earth is inhabited before setting off? The answer is a resounding yes.

Our atmosphere is a shining beacon to the rest of the galaxy that life resides under it. "Without life, our atmosphere wouldn't have oxygen in it," says Louisa Preston, an astrobiologist at the Open University. Earthly oxygen is created by plant life, along with microbes in our oceans, and makes up 21 percent of the atmosphere. It's believed that only life is capable of producing oxygen in such quantities, making it a 'biosignature' – a tell-tale sign of living inhabitants. And we already know it is possible to probe planetary atmospheres from afar – we are trying to do it ourselves.

MEASURING LIGHT

As a planet moves in front of its star, starlight passes through its atmosphere before continuing onwards towards our telescopes. Crucially, not all the light makes it through – some is absorbed by chemicals in the planet's atmosphere. That leaves a 'fingerprint' in the light we receive, betraying the atmosphere's composition. It is hoped that instruments such as the James Webb Space Telescope, will be able to detect biosignatures like oxygen in the atmospheres of alien worlds. Of course, any alien race already pointing similar technology towards Earth would be in no doubt that life resides here, at least on a microbial level.

They might even know that an intelligent, technological race dwells here. Nearby civilisations could detect our TV transmissions,

Right: Most 'UFO' sightings are easily attributable to mundane causes

Far right: Declassified documents from the Ministry of Defence's now-closed UFO desk

Did you know?

Unexplained phenomena in the sky are not new. Back in 1676 British astronomer Edmond Halley told of a strange object in the heavens appearing bigger than the Moon. He estimated it to be moving at almost 10,000 miles an hour.

DECLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

CIA documents reveal that 1950s skies really were full of flying saucers – but only human-made ones

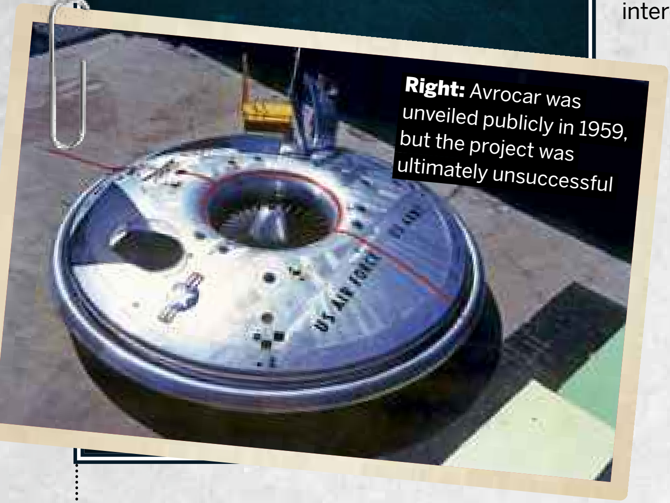
+ Secret military projects are an oft-cited explanation for UFOs, and over the last few decades, declassified documents have indeed shown that various countries around the globe have designed, built and tested flying machines that resemble flying saucers.

During WWII, the Germans tested an aircraft with circular wings. Designed by Arthur Sack and known as the Sack AS-6, it was cobbled together from salvaged parts. Several attempts to take it into the skies were made in 1944, but the plane was damaged in an attack that winter and broken up for firewood.

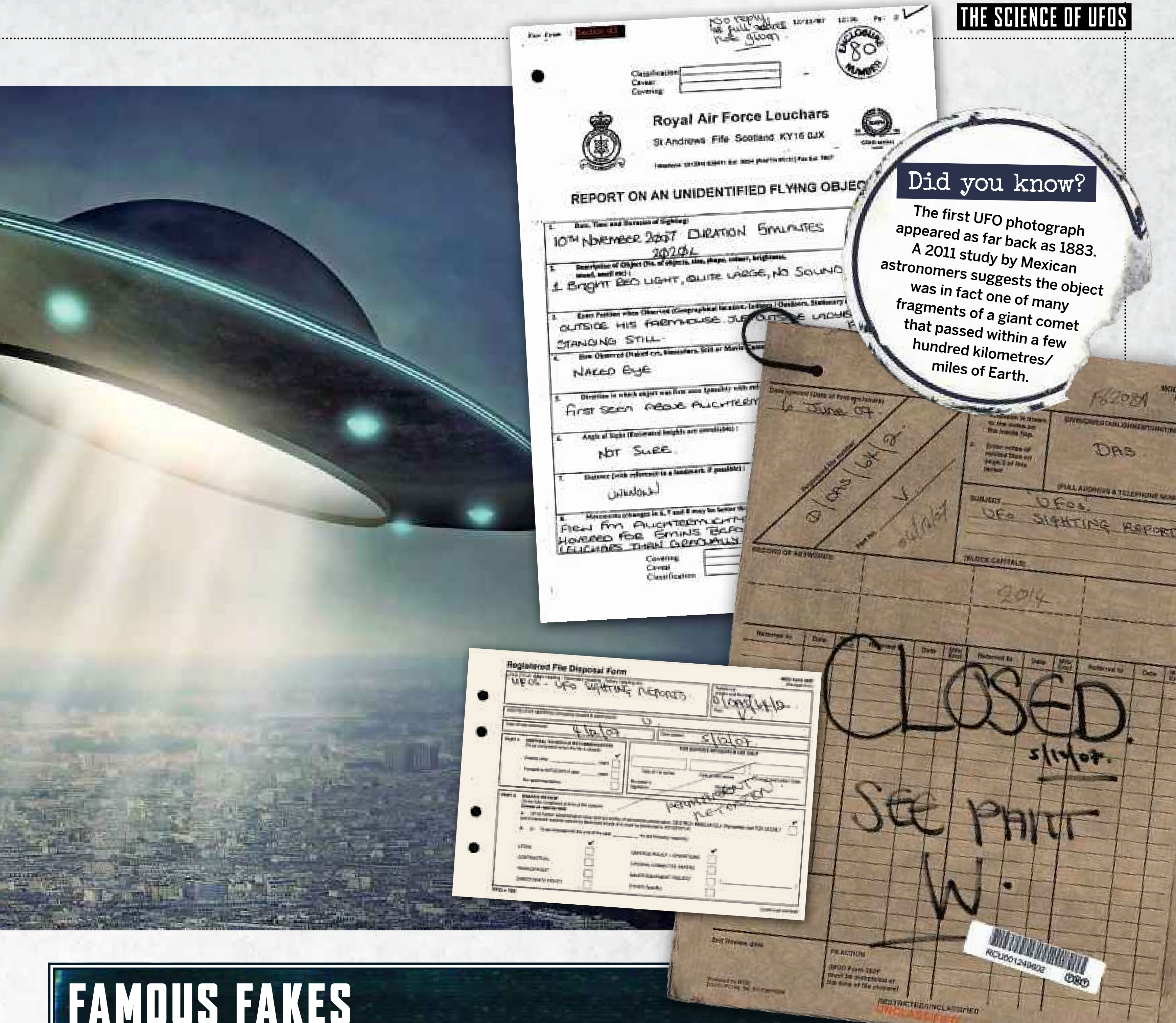
The US was also experimenting with aircraft design during WWII. Charles H Zimmerman designed the Vought V-173, dubbed 'the flying pancake'. Its maiden flight in November 1942 was followed by almost 200 more, and it drew a lot of attention from the residents of surrounding towns, including reports of UFOs.

But it was the advent of the Cold War that sparked a boom in disc-shaped flying machines. In the 1950s, French aviation designer René Couzinet envisioned a craft that would be at home in a sci-fi movie. Two counter-rotating discs were designed to spin around to provide lift, while the pilot sat in a glass bubble below. Couzinet made a 3:5 scale wooden model, but couldn't secure adequate funding to build a functional prototype.

Documents released by the CIA in 1999 also reveal that in the 1950s the British, Canadians and Americans secretly worked on a saucer-shaped craft. Their goal was an aircraft capable of vertical takeoff. A lot of the research was by the aviation firm Avro Canada. A prototype for the 'Avrocar' was revealed at Toronto's Malton Airport in 1959, but despite $10 million being spent on the project, instabilities during takeoff could not be ironed out and the plug was pulled in 1960.



Right: Avrocar was unveiled publicly in 1959, but the project was ultimately unsuccessful



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ENCLOSURE 80 NUMBER

Classification:
Caveat:
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Royal Air Force Leuchars

St Andrews Fife Scotland KY16 0JX

REPORT ON AN UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJEC

1. 10TH NOVEMBER 2007 DURATION 5MINUTES 2020L

2. 1 BRIGHT RED LIGHT, QUITE LARGE, NO SOUND

3. OUTSIDE HIS FARMHOUSE JUST OUTSIDE LEUCH STANDING STILL

4. NAKED EYE

5. FIRST SEEN ABOVE AUCHTERM

6. NOT SURE

7. UNKNOWN

8. FLEW FM AUCHTERMUCHTY HOVERED FOR 5MINS BEFO LEUCHARS THAN GRADUALLY

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Registered File Disposal Form

MEDC - UFO SIGHTING REPORTS

PERMANENT RETENTION

16 June 07

D/DAS/64/2

DAS

SUBJECT UFOs. UFO SIGHTING REPORT

2014

CLOSED. 5/11/07.

SEE PART W.

RCU001249602

Did you know?

The first UFO photograph appeared as far back as 1883. A 2011 study by Mexican astronomers suggests the object was in fact one of many fragments of a giant comet that passed within a few hundred kilometres/miles of Earth.

FAMOUS FAKES

Here are four famous UFO sightings that turned out not to be quite what they seemed…

THE BARBER'S BLUFF

+ Ralph Ditter, a barber in Zanesville, Ohio took two photos of flying saucers above his house in 1966. Put on display in his shop, they slowly began to garner more and more attention. However, later analysis proved that the photographed object was just a short distance away from the camera lens. Faced with this evidence, Ditter then confessed to creating the faked photos for his daughter's amusement.

THE FLORIDA FORGERY

+ In November 1987 the attention of the world's media fell on the little town of Gulf Breeze in Florida. Local contractor Ed Walters had turned up to his local newspaper with very clear photos of a UFO. In the months that followed he took dozens more – but in June 1990 an eerily familiar model UFO, constructed from foam dinner plates and paper, was found in the attic of a house that was formerly owned by Walters.

A SPORTING SHAM

+ Spectators watching the Vancouver Canadians baseball team were treated to a mid-game UFO fly-past in September 2013. Videos of a strange object sporting bright lights above the Nat Bailey Stadium went viral on Twitter and other social media, but a local science centre later admitted it was a drone – a hoax intended to draw attention to their recently upgraded planetarium. They've since reported a 65% increase in visitors.

MAKE BELIEVE IN MORRISTOWN

+ The calendar had just turned to January 2009 and the skies above Morristown, New Jersey were filled with UFOs. Media reports abounded with UFO experts claiming the odd lights seen in the sky by residents could not be human-made. Except they were. Chris Russo and Joe Rudy, curious to see how gullible people could be, used fishing wire to attach flares to helium balloons before launching them.

© Shutterstock; US Air Force;

military radar signals and atomic weapon tests. The earliest signals, from the 1930s, have penetrated over 80 light-years into the galaxy, potentially alerting would-be visitors to both our existence and our technological know-how. And in 1974, a signal known as the Arecibo message was deliberately broadcast into space. "It contains information about who we are and where the signal came from," says Preston.

It is not ludicrous, then, to imagine a few galactic civilisations equipped with the knowledge of an intelligently inhabited Earth. Whether they could then pay us a visit, however, depends on their ability to travel the vast distances between the stars.

INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL

When it comes to space travel, it is safe to say we are novices. The first human in space – Yuri Gagarin – didn't reach orbit until 1961, and the furthest we've sent astronauts is the Moon. Unmanned craft have gone further: in 2012 Voyager 1 became the first human-made object to leave the solar system, some 35 years after it left Earth. But this represents only the tiniest tiptoe into the galaxy.

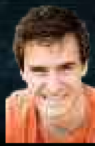
LIFE BEYOND EARTH
THE BIG DEBATE

Could UFOs actually be extraterrestrial?

STANTON FRIEDMAN

Professional ufologist

"As a nuclear physicist who has been studying the evidence for 56 years, I have concluded that the evidence is overwhelming, and that some UFO sightings are indeed extraterrestrial spacecraft. There are no good counter arguments – only people who haven't studied the evidence."



LEWIS DARTNELL

Astrobiologist, University of Leicester

"The oxygen signature in our atmosphere means Earth has been conspicuously alive for at least half a billion years. Yet that has apparently attracted no one's attention – there's no good evidence that we've been visited in recorded history. My interpretation is that we've attracted no one's attention because there is no one else out there – no technologically advanced alien civilisation in the Milky Way at the moment."

Did you know?

A poll conducted by The Huffington Post and YouGov in September 2013 revealed that 48% of American adults believe UFOs could be visits from an alien species. Only 35% of respondents ruled out the possibility completely.

> "A warp-drive spacecraft would manipulate the very fabric of space itself"

Right: Voyager 1 is the first human-made object to venture beyond the solar system

According to Einstein's theories, a beam of light is the fastest thing in the universe. You simply cannot get anywhere quicker than light can, and light takes four years to reach the next star after the Sun. The same journey would take Voyager 1 another 63,000 years. Exploring the rest of the galaxy would take even longer.

It's this vastness, coupled with Einstein's speed restrictions, that makes interstellar travel such a challenge. "It's difficult, but could be feasible," says Hakeem Oluseyi, from the Florida Institute for Technology, US. Along with his PhD student, Oluseyi is patenting a propulsion technique mimicking the way the Sun accelerates particles. "It could get you up to one percent the speed of light," he explains. At this speed, the next star would take around 400 years to reach, unfortunately still far longer than a human lifetime.

It's not just the time, but the cost too. In 2008 Brice Cassenti, now at the University of Connecticut, estimated a trip to our nearest star would require up to 100 times the current yearly energy output of Earth. Any fellow galactic residents would face similar challenges. So physicists have looked for shortcuts, ways an advanced civilisation could bend the rules.

"One possibility is a warp drive," says Oluseyi. It may be more reminiscent of *Star Trek*, but Oluseyi argues that "there's nothing in the laws of physics that prevents it". The idea is that a spacecraft would manipulate the very fabric of space itself, contracting space ahead of it while expanding space behind it. That creates a wave, which the craft can ride to reach its destination faster than light without breaking any of Einstein's rules of relativity. The catch with the warp drive technique, which NASA has been looking into, is that it requires huge amounts of 'exotic matter' – the existence of which is unclear.

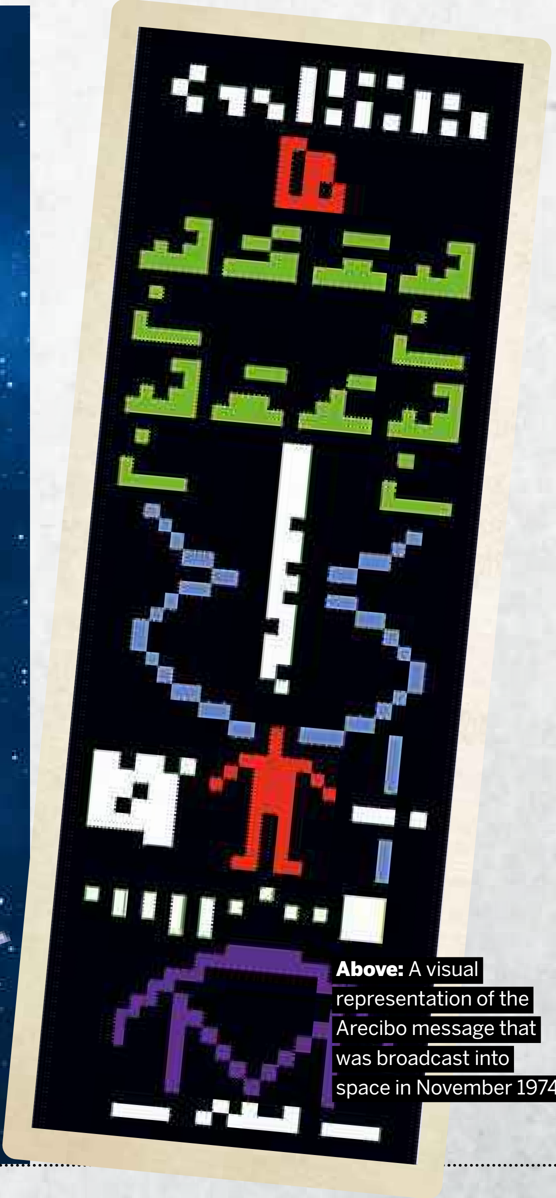
So, given that other life forms could exist, might have knowledge of our existence and could potentially have the tools needed to get to Earth, could the five percent of unexplained UFO sightings mentioned earlier really be the result of visits from extraterrestrials?

For a lot of scientists, including Oluseyi, the answer can be found in the nature of the reports. "The descriptions people give are too human-like, they are the sort of ships that we would build. To me that discredits them immediately," he explains. Visitors from a different planet, Oluseyi argues, would almost certainly be the result of a significantly different evolutionary path from our own.

What the seemingly endless fascination surrounding UFO sightings does show, however, is our desire not to be the only intelligent beings in the universe. Whether we are or not is something that scientists are working very hard to find out.

Did you know?

Since the advent of spaceflight there have been several reports from astronauts – including Apollo 11 pilot Buzz Aldrin – relating to unidentified objects in space. Aldrin has since declared himself "99.9% sure" what he saw was simply a detached panel.



Above: A visual representation of the Arecibo message that was broadcast into space in November 1974

UNCOVERED!

MUFON: for the benefit of humanity?

+ Founded in May 1969, the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) is the oldest and largest UFO organisation in the world. With 3,000 members spanning every inhabited continent, its stated aim is the "scientific study of UFOs for the benefit of humanity". MUFON currently has around 800 volunteer investigators who respond to UFO sightings, mostly in the continental United States. Each has gone through a training programme that culminates in an exam. Training includes interview techniques for witnesses and how to identify the misidentified objects, which constitute the majority of UFO explanations.

However, the organisation has come under attack from large parts of the scientific community who claim MUFON's work does not constitute science. Some researchers have been criticised for making wild, unsubstantiated claims including the existence of human-alien hybrids, some of whom walk among us. Perhaps tellingly, little, if any, of MUFON's work is subject to peer review – the rigorous gold standard for scientific accountability.

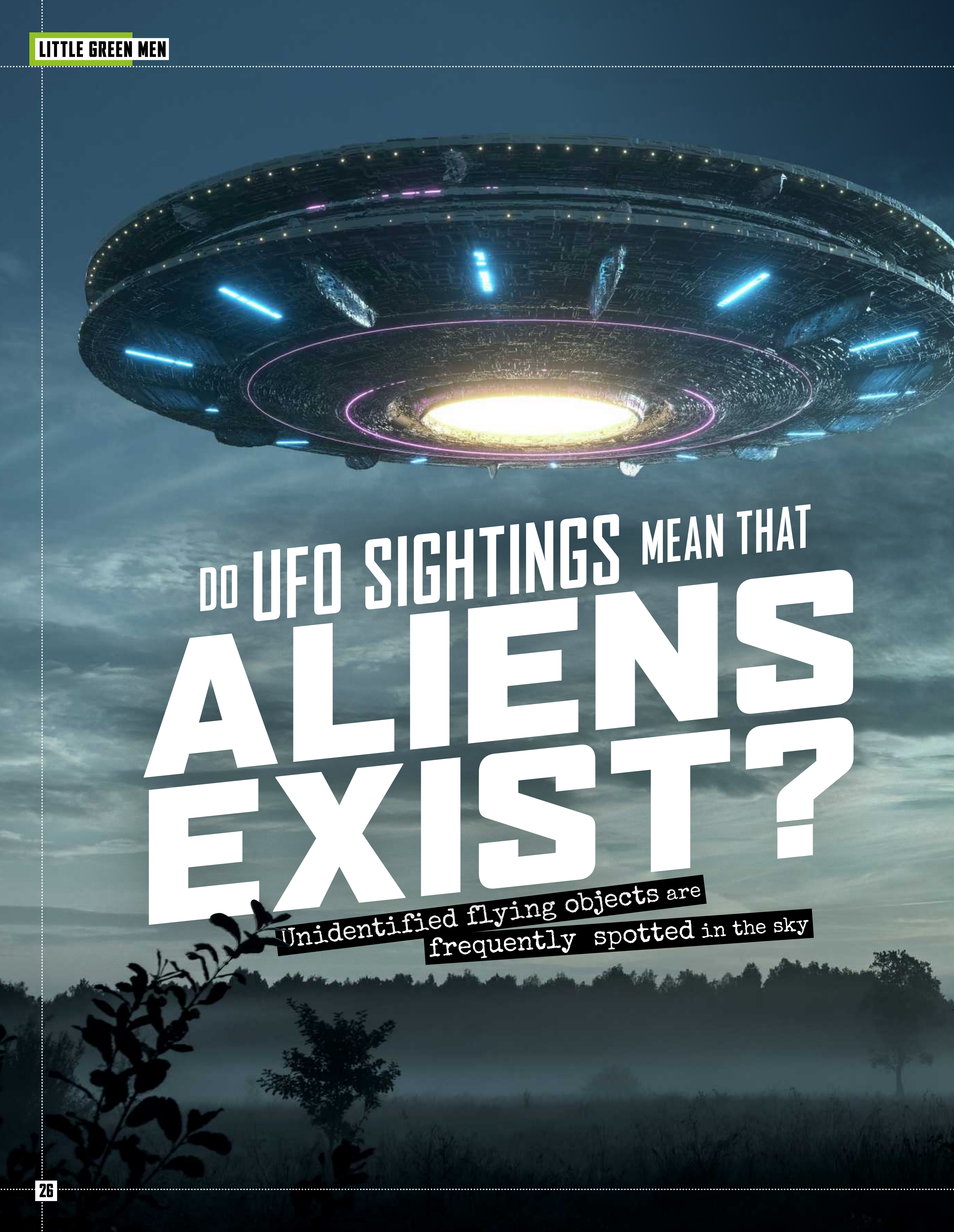
© Frank Drake (UCSC) et al, Arecibo Observatory (Cornell, NAIC); Getty; NASA

LITTLE GREEN MEN

Are UFOs proof of alien contact? Discover the most prevailing theory behind unidentified aerial phenomena

LITTLE GREEN MEN

26...Do UFO sightings mean that aliens exist?
28...Space invader species
30...From angels to aliens
38...Watch the skies
44...Closing in on alien life



DO UFO SIGHTINGS MEAN THAT ALIENS EXIST?

Unidentified flying objects are frequently spotted in the sky

We all love a good alien story. From the comical little green aliens in *Toy Story* to the villainous Thanos in the Marvel world, extraterrestrials play a huge role in popular culture. Whether they actually exist is another matter, though. For centuries, people have debated whether Earth is the only planet in the universe that supports life, and several missions to space have searched for clues. These explorations haven't found anything yet, but back here on Earth there have been many mysterious sightings of UFOs, and some people are convinced they've seen aliens. Most sightings are easily explained away as meteors, tricks of the light, or hoaxes, but there are still some that haven't been resolved. So, are we all alone in the universe, or do aliens exist?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

+ On 9 November 2018, pilots flying aircraft over Ireland reported seeing an unidentified flying object in the sky. The fast-moving light didn't seem to be a plane, and the pilots were told it wasn't a military test.

+ UFO sightings happen frequently around the world. Some become more famous than others but they always invite plenty of debate from UFO enthusiasts.

+ The first well-known UFO sighting occurred in 1947 when a businessman claimed to see nine high-speed flying objects. He said they moved "like saucers skipping on water". This description gave rise to the often-used expression "flying saucer".

YES – THEY'RE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE

+ The universe is massive. It's so big that astronomers think there could be 500 million planets that can support life just in our galaxy, the Milky Way. It's not crazy to think that one or more of them could be home to aliens. Throughout history, there have been reported sightings of unexplainable UFOs. It's easy to dismiss the idea of aliens because they sound like something from science fiction, but we have already discovered planets that could, in theory at least, support life. Although they may not travel in flying saucers or have three bulging eyes, the evidence suggests that we are unlikely to be alone.

THREE REASONS WHY ALIENS EXIST

1 Statistically, the chance of us living on the only planet that can support life in the entire universe is incredibly small.

2 There have been sightings of strange and unexplained UFOs throughout history – if they're not aliens, what are they?

3 Aliens might not be small, green creatures but other life forms could still exist.

NO – IT'S ALL NONSENSE

+ The idea of aliens is exciting, but there's no truth to it. If they did exist, why haven't they visited us yet? We know aliens in fiction, of course, we just don't know any real ones. It's our love of these extraterrestrials that makes us hope that they exist – but the science doesn't back it up. A US government study carried out from 1952 to 1969 looked at 12,000 UFOs and concluded that there was no evidence of extraterrestrials. The UFO sighting in Ireland was probably a shooting star, particularly as November is the busiest time of year for them. In fact, there are explanations for almost all reported UFO sightings in history – many are either optical illusions or meteors.

THREE REASONS WHY ALIENS DON'T EXIST

1 If aliens are real, where are they? If they existed, surely we'd have met them by now. What's taking them so long?

2 We don't have any evidence that aliens exist – the science doesn't back it up.

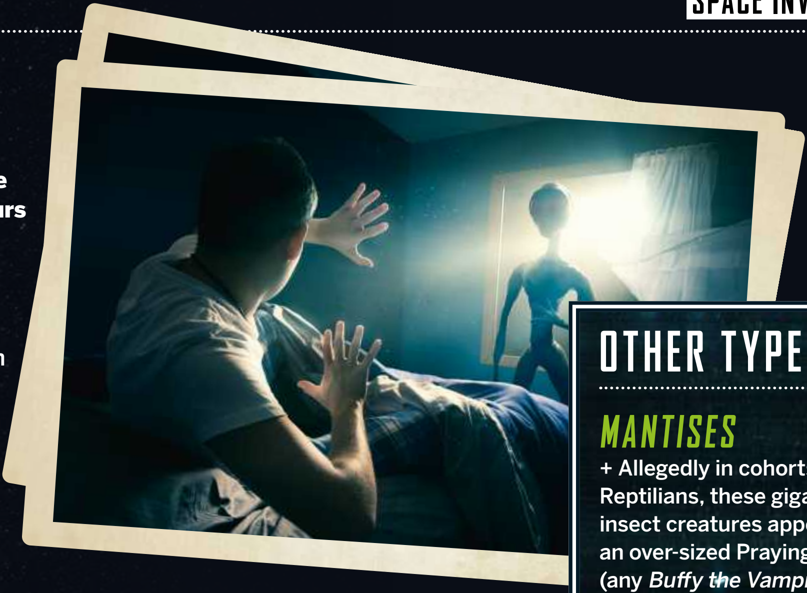
3 Humans love aliens because there are some great stories about them. It's wishful thinking to believe they exist.

© Getty; Shutterstock

SPACE INVADER SPECIES

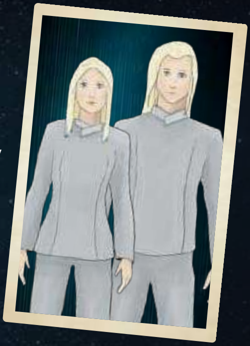
There have been many claims that not only are extraterrestrials behind UFO sightings, but that various entities from other planets are already here on Earth...

Conspiracy theories were off the chart in the 1990s, with rumours spreading like wildfire about alleged alien species being described in close encounters. Some are thought to have nefarious intentions, performing scientific experiments on human victims or infiltrating Earth in plain sight in order to invade and take control over our planet, while others are seen as mostly benevolent beings. Here are the most common types of extraterrestrial beings claimed to have been encountered…



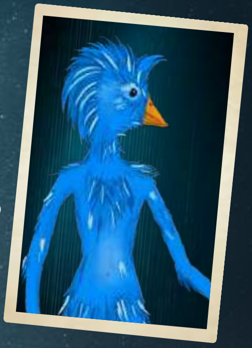
THE GOOD(?) GUYS

NORDIC



+ Humanoid aliens who are stereotypically Scandinavian in appearance – strikingly beautiful, very tall, blonde or white long hair, pale skin and blue eyes. They are said to be peacekeepers and spread knowledge to guide spiritual growth. Essentially, they are Tolkien-esque elves. They allegedly have powers of telekinesis and conspiracy theories abound claiming that they arrived with the Roswell crash, signed a peace treaty with US President Eisenhower in the 1950s and hail from the Pleiades star cluster, Venus or maybe Agartha, a kingdom thought to be on the inner surface of the Earth.

AVIANS

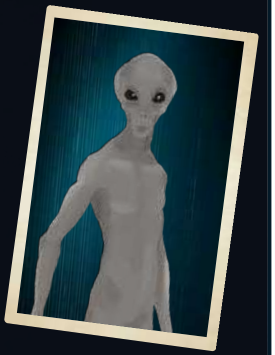


+ Tall (2.4m/8ft), blue bird-like humanoid creatures who, like the Nordics, spread peace and are here to help us fend off the evil elite who have control of our planet. They are said to travel in large planet-sized spheres (think of it as a chill, friendly Death Star), where they peacefully cohabit with numerous other alien species – sort of like a gigantic ball-shaped space cruiser.

THE BADDIES

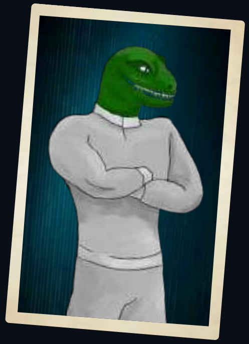
GREYS

+ These short (0.9m/3ft), hairless, grey-skinned humanoids have all the features that are synonymous with a stereotypical alien. Greys have large black almond-shaped eyes, a lipless mouth, nostrils but no nose, no ears, three or four fingers and a bulbous skull. They are the predominant type of alien in alleged close encounters, pilot flying saucers and are often accused of being behind alien abductions and cattle mutilations. Taller greys are also reported, who have authority over the smaller ones. Their goal is to create alien-human hybrids, which they then introduce into Earth's population for reasons unknown to us.



REPTILIANS

+ Tall, scaly humanoid creatures who are said to be highly malevolent and responsible for the majority of the world's ills – oh yes, they are already inhabiting the Earth. Hailing from the Draco or Orion constellations, they are shape-shifters and have supposedly taken on the human form of most of our world's most powerful people, from celebrity influencers to politicians, in their bid to control the Earth. Some say they harvest human pain for energy.



OTHER TYPES

MANTISES

+ Allegedly in cohorts with the Reptilians, these gigantic insect creatures appear like an over-sized Praying Mantis (any *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fans here? See season one episode, 'Teacher's Pet' for reference!). They secrete an oily substance, speak telepathically and sometimes are said to have shapeshifting abilities. They are able to control Grey aliens and also seek to create a hybrid species with humans – which has reportedly resulted in the Tall Blacks, who possess some distinctly human physical characteristics.

LITTLE GREEN MEN

+ No actual reported alien sightings have mentioned little green men – it's purely a Hollywood invention. However, small, greenish-silver goblins were reported in the Kelly-Hopkinsville encounter (see page 125).

RODS

+ Long rod-like shapes that have been captured on video or camera and reported to be an extraterrestrial being but are likely terrestrial insects.

CRYPTIDS

+ Many cryptids have been accused of being not of this world, starting with the Flatwoods Monster (see page 40), urban legends like Bigfoot, the Jersey Devil and Mothman have all been explained away as having extraterrestrial origins (see page 103).

© Adobe Stock; Getty; Shutterstock; Harriet Knight

FROM ANGELS TO ALIENS

Discover the ancient astronauts theory and its relationship to world religion and the supernatural

WORDS APRIL MADDEN

From the earliest days of humanity we have looked up at the sky and scattered gods and stories among the stars. The worshippers of the first recorded religion, that of the ancient Sumerians, placed their highest gods, the Anunnaki, in the heavens; thousands of years later, ufologists and conspiracy theorists would revisit these myths from early Iraq in their search for ancient aliens. The Anunnaki aren't the only legendary figures that have been linked with travel through, or from, the sky: Ireland's godlike Tuatha Dé Danann are described in the medieval text *Lebor Gabála Érenn* as having arrived in the Emerald Isle within a cloud of darkness, landing on the mountainside of Sliabh an Iarainn in County Leitrim. "The truth was not known beneath the sky of stars, whether they were of heaven or of earth," a poem in the book explains. Elsewhere in Ireland's annals, mention is made of "ships with their crews… seen in the air" over Clonmacnoise in County Offaly in the mid-8th century. Earlier than this, the Roman historian Livy recorded that "phantom ships had been seen gleaming in the sky" in the winter of 218 BCE. Other Roman sightings between the first century BCE and the second century CE record sparkling metallic rains, jar-shaped missiles, and chariots hurtling through the firmament over the soon-to-be significant little realm of Judea.

The Romans were a superstitious lot; they had priests called augurs who were tasked with looking for and interpreting omens on the cusp of momentous events like battles, declarations of war, or the births and deaths of great rulers. One of the augurs' preferred mediums for prophecy was the sky – clouds and stars and then-unpredictable comets – and it's been suggested that the Christmas legend of the Star of Bethlehem was in fact a story added to the

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life of Jesus at a later date to appeal to Roman would-be Christians, as archaeoastronomers still can't definitively identify a recorded celestial event in non-biblical texts that matches up to it.

DRAMA IN THE SKIES

But where the Romans were superstitious and proud of it, by the 1560s the people of northern Europe believed themselves to be modern and rational. Nonetheless, this eventful decade – the time of astronomer Tycho Brahe, and the foundation of the first scientific society – witnessed not one but two large-scale and inexplicable celestial phenomena in the skies above Nuremberg and Basel, the first significant European UAP sightings to be recorded since before the Dark Ages. It's likely that the medieval world actually experienced far more inexplicable celestial events than this, but low literacy, feudal localism and a lack of recordkeeping means many of these smaller sightings are lost. Nuremberg and Basel, however, were large, cosmopolitan cities of significant cultural and economic importance to the known world. What happened there often became international news.

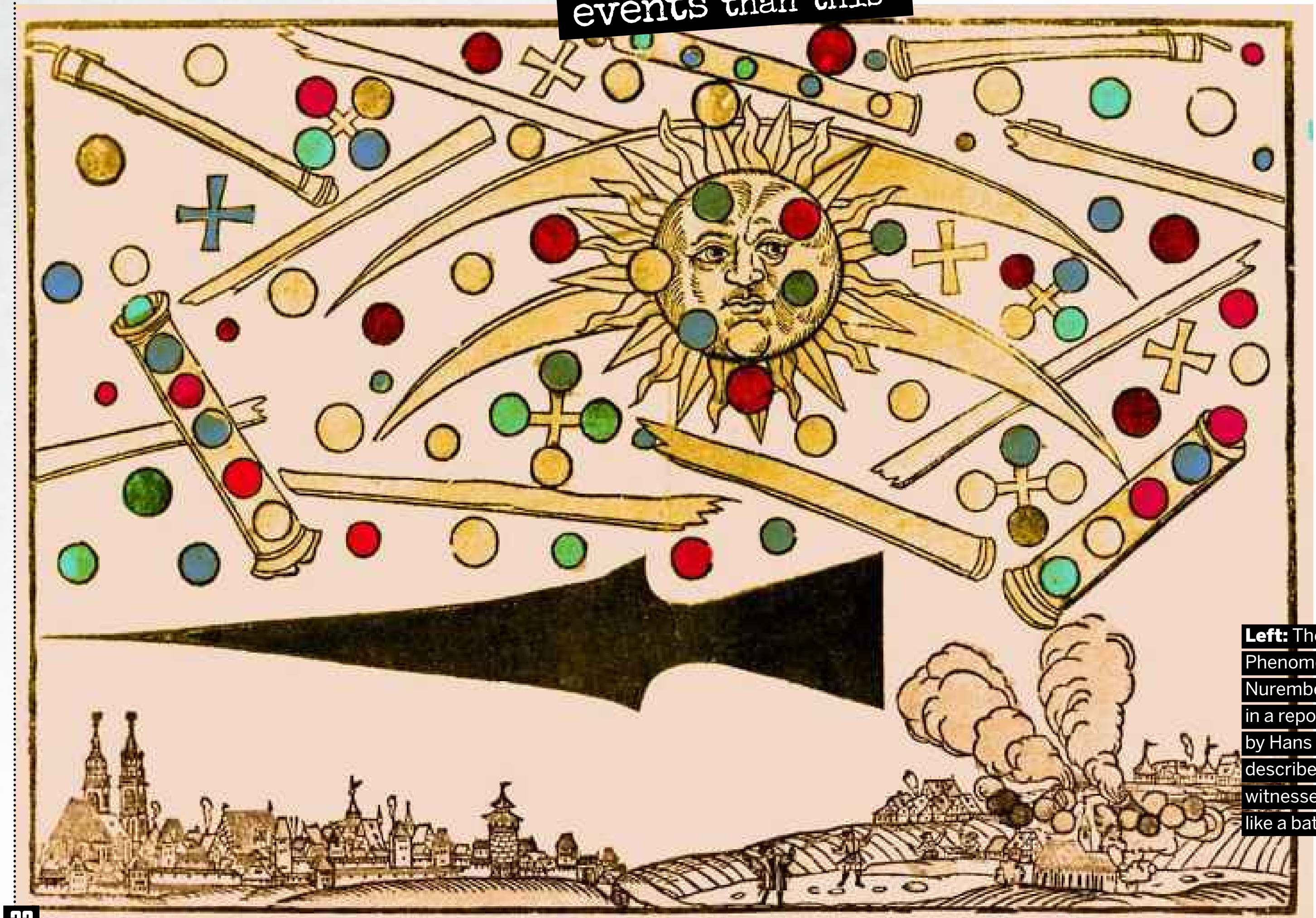
At dawn on Friday 14 April 1561, the people of the imperial free city of Nuremberg, today a part of Germany, witnessed what they described as an aerial battle above their home. Blood-red shapes fretted the sky, and, as an early form of newspaper recorded, "flew back and forth among themselves and fought vehemently with each other for over an hour". The writer of the report, Hans Glaser, compared their actions to military manoeuvres, noting that the shapes flew about violently in and out of the rising sun until, apparently exhausted, they fell to the ground. Their expiry was followed by the appearance of a vast black spear-like shape, its tip flung portentously to the west. "Whatever such signs mean," Glaser told his readers, "God alone knows".

This wasn't Nuremberg's first experience with unexplained aerial phenomena, and it wouldn't be its last – the city commonly reported what witnesses described as knights fighting in the skies, often on holy days or during wartime. It's worth noting that despite its self-described rationality, Nuremberg was deeply embedded in both the witch-panics that plagued 16th century Europe, and in the rise of the new Christian denomination of Protestantism, vividly coloured with the omens and portents seen by its fervent and visionary faithful.

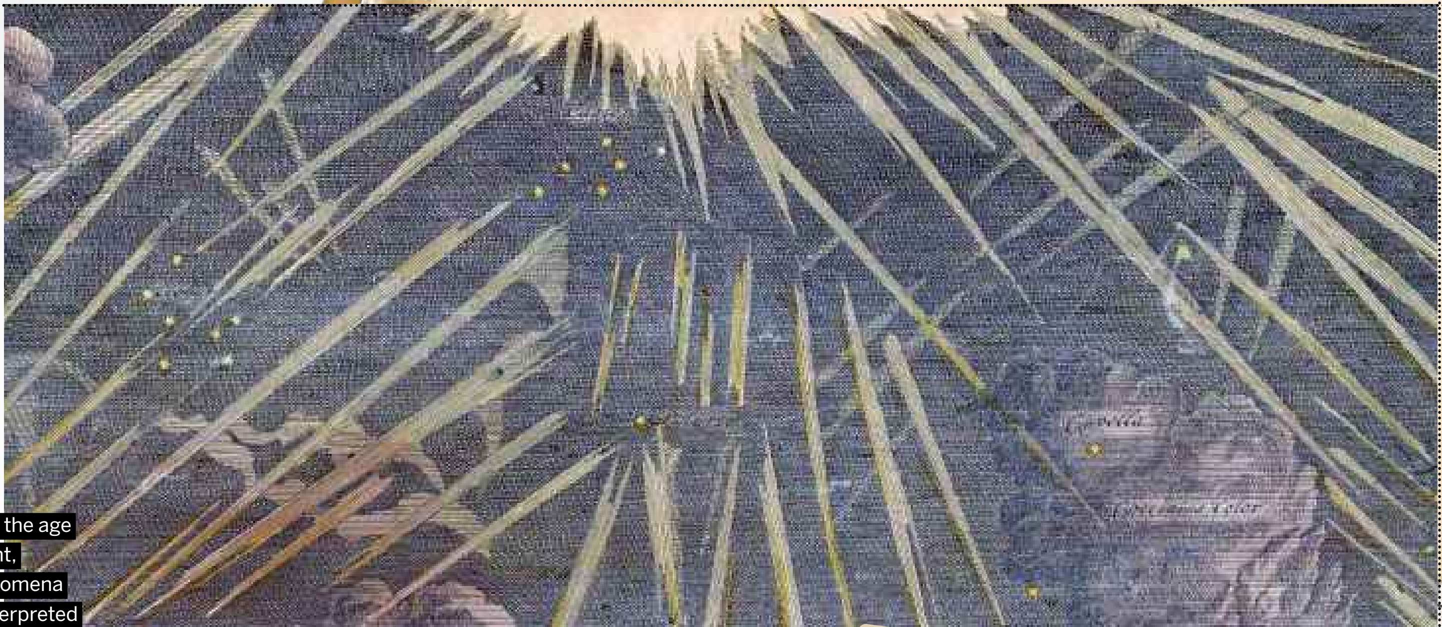
Basel in Switzerland was at the same cultural crossroads as the rest of northern Europe, and in 1566 it reported its own summer of sky spectacles. From the end of July to the beginning of August that year, the city found itself at the centre of some ominous celestial phenomena. Reports say that on 27 July, at around 9pm after a clear and sunny summer's day, the sun seemed to shrink and darken, before appearing to weep tears of blood. The moon, too, looked dull and bloody, though it was almost full and had been shining brightly the night before. In the days that followed, the sun stayed sullen and smoky, like a slumbering coal. Finally, on 7 August, "large black spheres" appeared at great speed, their formations precise and tight before the blood-red sun. They "chattered" – the report is unclear whether this is a description of their movements or a noise – and began combat. As they fought, they grew fiery red themselves, before crumbling into ash.

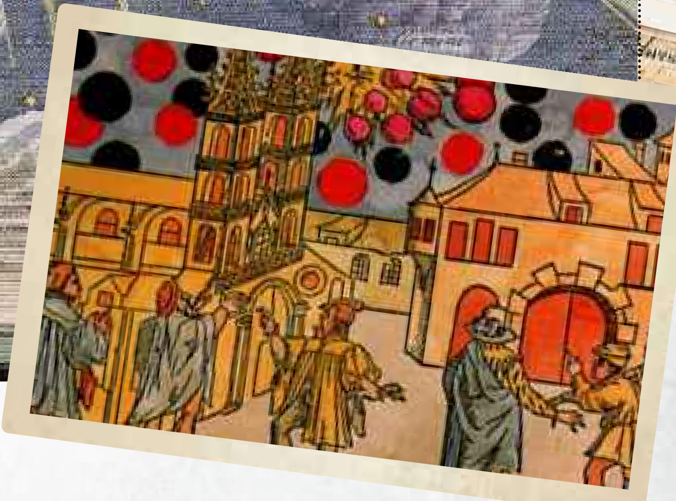
Nobody knows what the people of Nuremberg and Basel really saw on those fateful days. Suggestions have ranged from clouds of breeding insects, to smoke, to localised weather events, to atmospheric phenomena like sun dogs, in which the refraction of sunlight off ice crystals high in the atmosphere (both Nuremberg and Basel

> "It's likely that the medieval world actually experienced far more inexplicable celestial events than this"



Left: The Celestial Phenomenon Over Nuremberg, depicted in a report at the time by Hans Glaser, was described by witnesses as being like a battle





Right: Before the age of human flight, celestial phenomena were often interpreted as supernatural events or signs from God

Far right: The Celestial Phenomenon over Basel was described as a conflict of whirring spheres in front of a bloody, darkened sun

are at a decent altitude) causes the appearance of arcs and orbs of light, even 'second suns'. For ufologists, the conclusion is clear: they believe that the two cities really did witness unexplained aerial phenomena, maybe even a conflict between alien races. The contemporary interpretation of the events across the two cities, however, leans heavily into the supernatural and the religious. They were signs from God, perhaps skirmishes in a war in Heaven that mirrored the conflicts of territory and ideas that ran red through 16th century Europe, in which angels clashed over possession of the fiery skies and the mortals grubbed insignificantly beneath them.

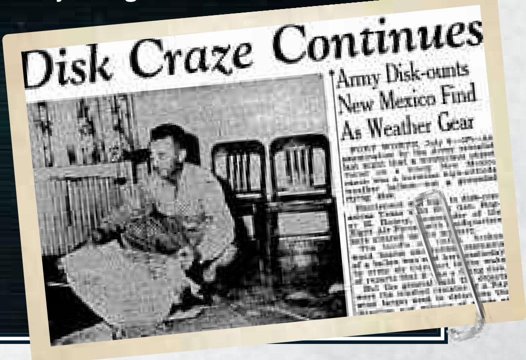
ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA

Many early would-be UFO sightings are of UAP rather than alien encounters, precisely because of the religious, superstitious nature of pre-modern civilisations. While highly educated ancient Greeks were conceptually aware that the world is round, the less academically inclined folk of the ancient and medieval world scarcely even thought about the planet that they lived on. When they did, it was in the context of cosmological layers: the Earth, where humans went about their daily business; the underworld beneath, whether conceived as a twilight realm of the dead or pit of torment for

I WANT TO BELIEVE

While they invoke hi-tech tropes, UFOs are still largely taken on faith

+ Belief in aliens, UFOs and UAPs has only been monitored for a limited amount of time. While there is evidence in the historical record of events, such as the celestial phenomena over Nuremberg and Basel, up until the 19th century these events were understood in a different, more supernatural context. It's only in the age of powered human flight that we have switched focus to view these events as potentially alien technology. The age of the first commercial airships coincided with an uptick in UFO sightings, and in the language used to describe them. Reports of 'strange airships' that describe metallic hulls and twinkling lights really started to emerge in the United States from 1896 onwards, becoming more prevalent along a timeline that coincides with the Space Race and an increase in military spending on research into aircraft technology. The peak of reported sightings is the 1947 Flying Disc Craze, in which over 800 official public reports of UFO sightings were made across the United States, with many thousands more reported anecdotally, all spurred by media reports of pilot Kenneth Arnold encountering a fleet of nine flying discs around Washington State's Mount Rainier; he claimed that they were flying at upwards of 1,931km/h (1,200m/h). The summer of sightings, often attributed to mass hysteria, also gave us the term 'flying saucer'. Today, according to a 2023 Ipsos poll, 42 percent of Americans believe in UFOs, while one in ten report that they have seen one – a figure largely unchanged since polling and recordkeeping on the subject began.



Disk Craze Continues

Army Disk-ounts New Mexico Find As Weather Gear

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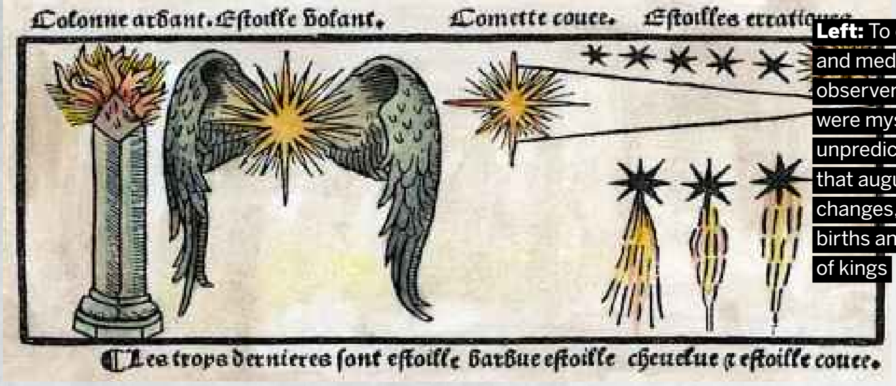

Colonne ardant. Eſtoille volant.
Comette couee.
Eſtoilles erratiq
Les troys dernieres ſont eſtoille barbue eſtoille cheuelue & eſtoille couee.

Left: To classical and medieval observers, comets were mysterious and unpredictable visitors that augured great changes, and the births and deaths of kings

Christian sinners; and the heavens above, the soaring blue realm that was home to gods and angels. Any sight of or interaction with a seemingly unearthly being would not be described as an alien encounter – our ancient and medieval ancestors, largely, could not conceive of this in quite the same way we do today – but as a visitation from the elven, the fae, or the divine. Myth and legend is littered with such examples. Often, like the Anunnaki and the Tuatha Dé Danann, these mysterious outsiders arrive in a primitive land, bringing with them technological advances that change the face of the society that they're met with; they are culture heroes practising (and occasionally dispensing) promethean knowledge.

The Sumerians had a codified system that logged and explained the arts of civilisation, known as me, which they believed they had inherited from the Anunnaki. The me taught everything from the art of war, to music, to building, smithcraft, libel law, and even prostitution. The Tuatha Dé Danann were believed to have brought farming to Ireland, teaching agriculture and animal husbandry to the Irish Gaels. Their King Nuada is recorded as having lost an arm in battle, which was replaced with a fully working silver prosthesis that his doctors caused skin to grow over by reciting a spell. The process took nine days and nights and sounds an awful lot like advanced bionics.

GODS FROM THE SKIES

The Anunnaki and the Tuatha Dé Danann were recorded as boasting superhuman strength and beauty; this last trait is a feature shared by Japan's Kaguya-hime, the protagonist of the country's earliest known folktale, from the 9th century Heian period. Unlike the Irish and ancient Iraqi stories, this Japanese tale is explicit about where its heroine came from. The 'shining princess' is found by an elderly bamboo cutter inside a mysteriously glowing stalk, and rapidly grows up to be the most beautiful woman in the land. Romanced by the emperor himself, the shy celestial maiden rejects his advances and returns to her home in Tsuki no Miyako, the capital city of the moon, with a heavenly host who come to collect her, telling her adoptive parents that her time on Earth was merely a period of penance that she has now completed. No other folk myth is quite so clear on the extraterrestrial origin of its subject.

For many other myths, legends and religious texts, today's theories about their otherworldly figures' apparently other-world origins largely stems from the work of one man: Erich von Däniken. This Swiss author popularised the idea of ancient astronauts in the 1960s, with the 1968 publication of his book *Chariots of the Gods*. Titled *Memories of the Future: Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* in its original language, *Chariots of the Gods* was in fact heavily rewritten by its editor, German screenwriter Wilhelm Utermann, before being translated into English, in which it went on to become a bestseller. The book postulates that aliens visited Earth during prehistory and early antiquity, bringing with them culture and technology, causing our ancestors to view these ancient astronauts as gods. Several archaeological sites and monuments are cited as evidence of von Däniken's claims, notably Britain's Stonehenge, the monolithic figures of Easter Island, the pyramids of ancient Egypt, and Peru's Nazca Lines. The book suggests that these impressive ancient sites were built by humans in imitation of the alien structures they had seen, or as messages of welcome to their otherworldly overlords, designed to be seen from space. The author even goes as far as to allege that the 1513 map known as the Piri Reis after its Ottoman cartographer, is in fact a chart of Earth as seen from orbit.

Other apparent evidence included in the book includes the visual similarity between 1960s space suits and Japanese Jomon period sculptures, and the idea that the Ark of the Covenant was an interstellar communications device. These ideas weren't entirely new – many built on the works of previous authors, most notably Robert Joseph Grugeau, who under his pen name of Robert Charroux wrote science fiction on the ancient astronauts theme – but von Däniken was an exciting, transgressive figure, and his book rode the wave of both the countercultural zeitgeist and the mainstream hype surrounding the Space Race and the USA's upcoming moon shot with Apollo 11.

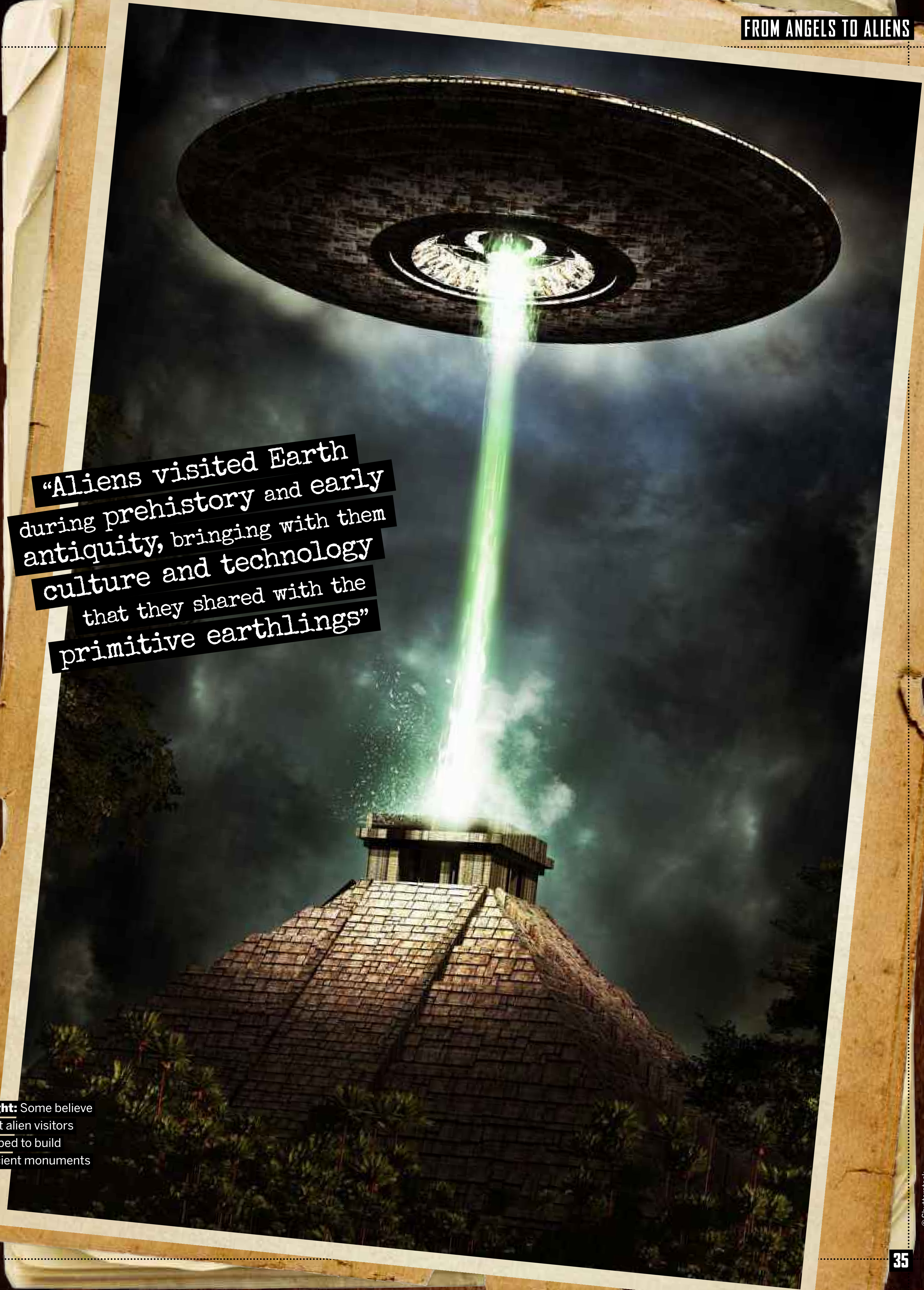
ENLIGHTENED CIVILISATIONS

The countercultural movements of the 1960s were fascinated with world religions. Hinduism and Buddhism were the most popular, but the hippie trail wandered as far as North Africa and South America on its quasi-shamanic journeys, and was also happy to dabble in Celtic and Norse myth on its forays into witchcraft. Many practitioners found themselves immersed in the Victorian and early-20th century works of Western esoteric authors like Dion Fortune and Theosophists like Helena Blavatsky, who were trying to find ways to explore and unify world

Right: Many ancient monuments are cited as evidence of the ancient astronauts theory, such as the Nazca Lines geoglyphs in Peru

Below: Erich von Däniken popularised the idea of ancient astronauts in his bestselling book *Chariots of the Gods*

CHARIOTS OF THE GODS?



“Aliens visited Earth during prehistory and early antiquity, bringing with them culture and technology that they shared with the primitive earthlings”

Right: Some believe that alien visitors helped to build ancient monuments

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myth systems in the hope of uncovering a single, understandable spiritual history of humankind: a secret key to enlightenment.

For many, Fortune in particular, the answer to their questions was the myth of Atlantis. These authors conceived of the lost continent as a highly advanced civilisation, perhaps sited near modern-day Santorini and destroyed in the volcanic eruption and resulting tsunami that forced the abandonment of the town of Thera in 726 CE. Here the common ancestors of both the Celts and the ancient Egyptians lived in a crystal-powered land of plenty, and their wisdom could be accessed by modern believers via meditations that allowed their consciousness to ascend to the astral plane.

Blavatsky went even further, piggybacking an entirely new lost continent on the theory of a proposed Indian Ocean land bridge, which Victorian zoologist, Philip Sclater, had conceptualised as a possible explanation for the distribution of lemur fossils. The later discovery of plate tectonics proved Sclater's vague hypothesis wrong, but not before Blavatsky and her followers had conjured the fictional Lemuria into humanity's ancient and mystical home country, sometimes known as Mu and inextricably intertwined with Atlantean belief. For von Däniken, linking his ancient astronauts with Fortune and Blavatsky's astral ancients was an obvious conclusion.

Lemuria and Atlantis were believed to be on the Earth's surface until they cataclysmically

FLYING SAUCER CULTS

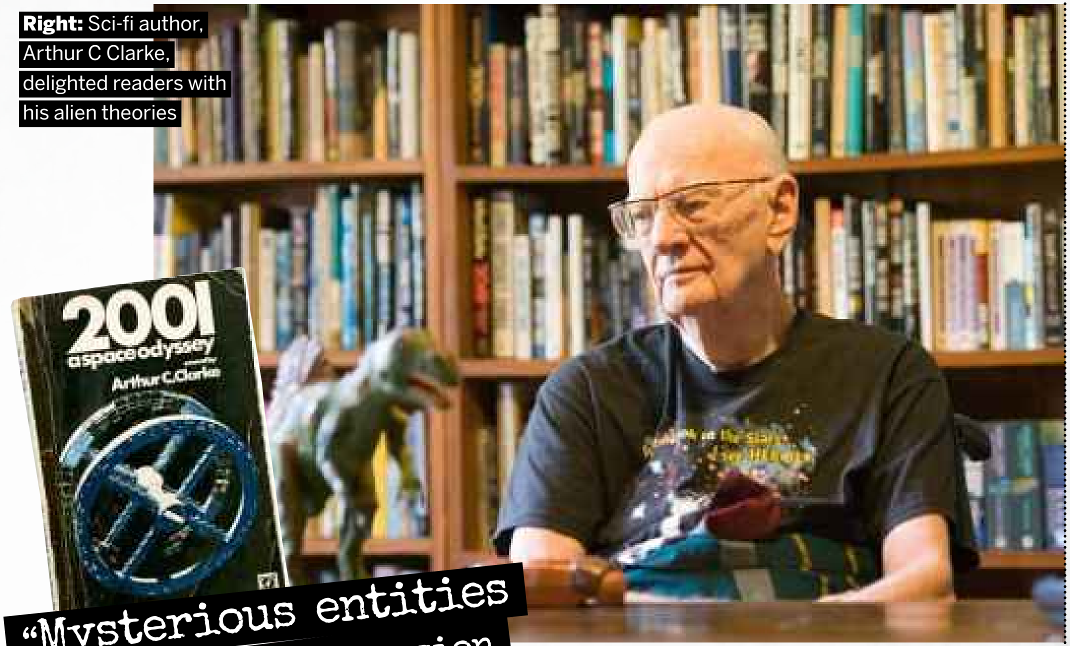
We've seen ufology claim religion, but how about faiths?

+ Proponents of the ancient astronauts theory claim a range of religious pantheons and supernatural figures from across the world as evidence of extraterrestrial visitation, but some newer belief systems are directly inspired by modern tales of alien encounters. Called UFO religions, these groups look to extraterrestrial intelligences as their figureheads instead of the more traditional gods. Among the oldest and the most famous is the Aetherius Society. Rooted in the tenets of Theosophy, it's a syncretic faith, meaning that it draws influences from multiple cultural sources – in this case, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, yoga, and of course, ufology. It views dominant world religious figures such as Jesus, Krishna and Buddha as 'Cosmic Masters' who visited Earth from other planets – and indeed other planes of reality – in order to teach humanity how to be moral, spiritual, and how to ascend to a higher state of consciousness. The society was founded in the mid-1950s, at the height of the UFO craze, by Englishman George King.

Right: This cairn of stones on Holdstone Hill, Devon, UK, marks the place where the Aetherius Society claim that Jesus landed on Earth in a spaceship from Venus

Below: Stonehenge is thought to be one of the monuments whose construction was inspired by alien visitors

disappeared beneath it, but for some, the secret of human civilisation lay beneath: in the underground kingdom of Agartha. This legendary hidden land inside the Hollow Earth became a fertile field for ufology, with author Mac Tonnies predicating his cryptoterrestrial hypothesis on it. According to Tonnies, the beings that we conceive of as aliens, those responsible for abduction phenomena and UFOs, are in fact Earth dwellers like ourselves – more so, for they inhabit the shadowy realm beneath the surface. Tonnies' name for these mysterious beings – similar in conception to the British and Irish fae of the hollow hills – means 'hidden earthling'. Like the Atlanteans and Lemurians, the Agarthans and/or cryptoterrestrials are believed to be highly advanced, boasting technology so sophisticated that to us mere humans, it seems "indistinguishable from magic" in the words of sci-fi author Arthur C Clarke.



Right: Sci-fi author, Arthur C Clarke, delighted readers with his alien theories

"Mysterious entities who in this dimension can take on whatever physical form they choose"

GOING SUPERNATURAL

Other hypotheses for the origins of UAP and alien belief also have their roots in 19th century Theosophic and Spiritualist traditions. The Victorians' fascination with ghost lore brought with it a codifying of the spiritual realm, which when combined with some (later disproven) theories about the physics of light, resulted in a quasi-cosmological model composed of seven metaphysical planes, one of which, the etheric, was believed to be a plane entirely of non-physical, spiritual being. This idea was invoked to explain 1940s UFO sightings as "Ether Ships" by occultist Meade Layne, but when it met scientific speculation about parallel universes, alternate dimensions and the multiverse, popular from the 1950s onwards, the Interdimensional UFO hypothesis was born. This theory posits that UAPs and aliens are not travellers from planets that exist in the same universe and physical reality as ourselves, but from dimensions completely outside it. Some ufologists find that this helps them to understand the seeming connections between alien and angel, between UAP and psychic phenomena. Author John Keel argues in favour of "ultraterrestrials", mysterious entities who in this dimension can take on whatever physical form they choose, and do so in order to promulgate human belief in gods, monsters and magic for reasons unknown.

Another theory borne out of genuine scientific enquiry, this time mashed up with pop culture tropes, is the Time-traveller UFO hypothesis. In this theory, considered unorthodox even by many hardcore UFO believers, UAPs are not visitations from another place but another time. That magical-looking technology mentioned by Arthur C Clarke is not alien, but simply future-human. Another name for this hypothesis is Terminator Theory, taken from the James Cameron movie series about time-travelling humans and androids on missions to either conquer or save humanity, and indeed much of its ideas seem to owe more to Spielberg than they do to science.

These theories of UFO phenomena and alien visitation can be entertaining, but they're also intrinsically problematic. While many cultures around the world have myths and legends associated with beings that come from, or live in, the sky, too often pseudoscientific ancient astronaut theories focus on sites of non-European origin, as if falsely assuming that Indigenous peoples, or those of colour, could not produce monuments of such obvious technical prowess. Australian academic, A L McCann, notes that the tropes that revolve around so-called lost races, and so by extension the various ancient astronauts hypotheses that they inspire, are often most popular in post-colonial nations like the USA or McCann's native Australia, because they "attempt to create a lineage for white settlers without having to confront the annihilation of Indigenous people"; a way of trying to claim a manifest destiny from the arcane and unearthly without acknowledging the reality of conquest and colonialism, even subconsciously.

The truth, however, is out there: it's that across the ancient world our ancestors looked up at the sky and dreamed, and in order to honour and reverence the heroes, deities, rulers and divinities they believed in – sometimes in worship of the very sky itself – they put their time, resources and earthbound ingenuity into the creation of temples, palaces and holy places, built by humans, for humans.

Left: Could the Easter Island moai have been a result of extraterrestrial influence? Some think so

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WATCH THE SKIES

From 1947 onwards America found itself in the grip of a flying saucer frenzy – but were these sightings really invaders from Mars?

WORDS CALLUM MCKELVIE

"Keep looking, keep watching the skies!" Douglas Spencer proclaims during the final moments of the 1951 sci-fi horror film, *The Thing From Another World*. From 1947 onwards that's just what America was doing, as the nation became gripped by a flying saucer frenzy. The birth of the UFO phenomenon is one of the most intriguing moments in late 1940s and 1950s popular culture. During this period some of the most infamous UFO sightings of the 20th century occurred, and places like Roswell became synonymous with visitors from other planets and sinister conspiracies. But as the world entered one of the hottest phases of the Cold War, just why was America obsessed with "watching the skies"?

As far as historians have been able to tell, the beginning of the flying saucer craze can be traced back to events that occurred on 24 June 1947, when businessman and amateur aviator Kenneth Arnold witnessed something strange in the airspace above Mineral, Washington. Arnold was circling in his small private plane around the area surrounding Mount Rainier, where a Marine Corps plane was said to have recently crashed. There was a $5,000 reward for anyone who located the wreckage, but Arnold would find something far more eerie in the skies above the mountain. It began when he was startled by a blue flash in the periphery of his vision. The surprised pilot looked around desperately but could see nothing except a DC-4 aircraft roughly 25 kilometres (15 miles) away, which couldn't possibly have caused the strange glow. Suddenly, Arnold saw nine bright boomerang-shaped objects flying in "a diagonally stepped-down, echelon formation". Upon realising that the objects were travelling a distance of some 80 kilometres (50 miles) in the space of one minute and 42 seconds, Arnold worked out that they were travelling 2,735kph (1,699mph) – more than twice the speed of sound. At this point it is worth remembering that no jet had yet broken the sound barrier.

The next day Arnold gave an interview to a reporter – little did he or the journalist realise the effect his story would have. According to *Smithsonian Magazine*, by the end of 1947 there were almost 300 UFO sightings – the United States was in the grip of a 'flying saucer frenzy'.

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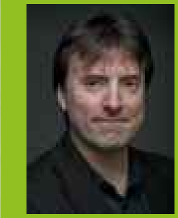
EXPERT BIOS



DR DAVID CLARKE

+ Clarke is associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University and co-founder of the Centre for Contemporary Legend research group. He is the author of *How UFOs Conquered the World* and *The UFO Files: The Inside Story of Real-Life Sightings.*

CIAN GILL

+ Gill is a scientist who researches and presents *Wide Atlantic Weird,* a podcast about fringe beliefs. His interests include cryptozoology, Victorian fantasy fiction, and the early years of UFO lore.

FATE
The Truth About the Flying Saucers
Mark Twain and Halley's Comet
Invisible Beings Walk the Earth
Twenty Million Maniacs
The FLYING DISKS

But if Arnold said he saw 'boomerang shapes', why did UFOs come to be known as 'flying saucers'? "When he described what he had seen, he was still talking about crescent shapes," says Dr David Clarke, UFO expert and associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend. The mistake Arnold made was in the phrase he used to describe the movement of the objects. Cian Gill, host of *Wide Atlantic Weird*, a podcast about unexplained phenomena, says: "When Arnold described the craft to the press he… said that they moved 'like a saucer if you skip it across the water'". However, despite Arnold describing only the movement of the objects as 'like a saucer', the key phrase had been used and was about to redefine the popular image of the 'alien spacecraft' forever.

"The sub editor (or whoever it was, no one's actually been able to name them) put 'flying saucers' and that was syndicated right across North America," explains Clarke. "So virtually every newspaper carried the story and that quickly spread to the European papers and even as far as Australia." The term 'flying saucer' seems to have tapped into something in the public consciousness. "In the years that followed, you've got people reporting having seen 'flying saucers'. How did that come about?" Clarke muses. "Clearly, a lot of them did actually see things in the sky. Later, the US Air Force collected peoples' descriptions of these things and found that there was no consensus of what people were seeing yet. Some people did see saucers, but others saw rocket- or pyramid-shaped things. But for the

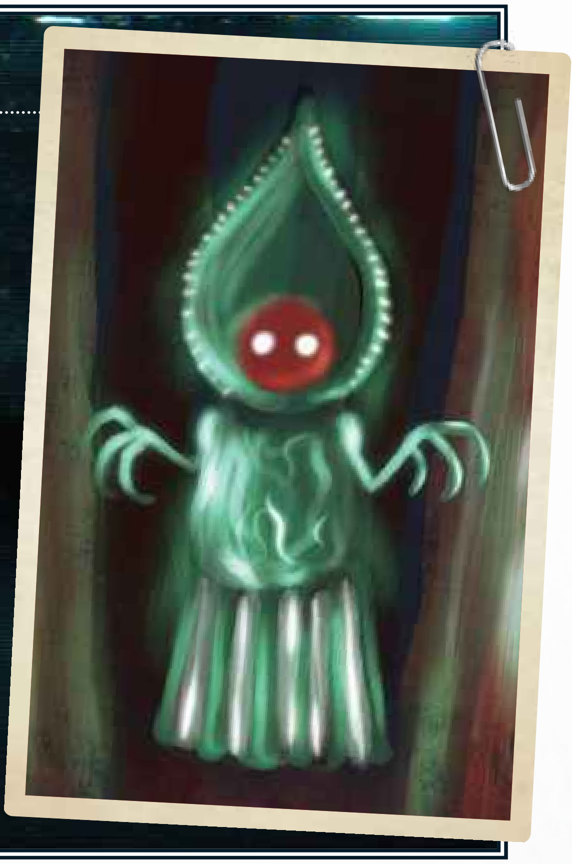
THE FLATWOODS MONSTER!

Of all the noted UFO sightings of the 1950s, one still sends a shiver down the spine…

+ Flatwoods is a small town in Braxton County in the hills of West Virginia. At 7.15pm on 12 September 1952, events occurred there that meant, ever since, Flatwoods has been associated with a terrifying apparition. Three teenage boys were playing in their schoolyard when they saw something red and fiery fly across the sky, appearing to crash at a local farm. One of the boys fetched his mother, Mrs May, and the group made its way over to the farm. Approaching the crash site through the woods, the group saw something that would haunt them forever.

The creature was described by 17-year-old Gene Lemon as a "10ft monster with a blood-red body and a green face that seemed to glow". Two vast beams of light appeared to project outward from its eyes and scour the dense mist. As the light from Lemon's torch hit the creature, they were able to see it more clearly. The monster was described as having a green body, and Mrs May said it had drape-like folds. (Some of the boys present disputed this, instead describing the creature as dark in colour.) Its face was round and red, with a hood-like shape surrounding it. The monster was seen for only the briefest moment before it let out a terrifying hiss and glided menacingly towards the group. In sheer terror, the boys and Mrs May fled through the trees.

A number of explanations have been given over the years for what the group saw. A meteor did pass over the village and was seen by numerous people, explaining the bright light in the sky. Ufologist Major Donald Keyhoe claimed that the US Air Force had sent two investigators, who determined that the meteor had "merely appeared to be landing when it disappeared over the hill". But what of the monster? According to Keyhoe, the investigators concluded that the creature was "probably a large owl perched on a limb". Various other accounts and the work of sceptic Joe Nickell would seem to corroborate this, but the legend of the Flatwoods Monster lives on and today the little town remains a popular tourist attraction.



Left: Kenneth Arnold, whose 1947 UFO encounter triggered a flying saucer frenzy

Far left: A 1948 copy of *Fate* magazine with an illustration of Arnold's encounter on the cover

Below: Irving Newton with the wreckage of the supposed flying saucer found by rancher Mack Brazel in Roswell, New Mexico

majority of people, objects from outer space were disc-shaped and that remained the case through the 1950s. That was the overwhelming idea of what a spacecraft should look like."

THE ORIGIN OF ROSWELL

A name that has become synonymous with UFO conspiracies is Roswell in New Mexico. However, the supposed 'incident' there at the time was only a flash in the pan. "In July of 1947 a rancher by the name of Mack Brazel found some debris strewn across his farm," Gill explains. "He didn't think too much of it and indeed forgot about it for several weeks." However, as news of the recent saucer phenomenon began to reach Brazel's ears, he started to think of his mysterious find a little differently. Given the 'wreckage' included tinfoil and pieces of rubber, it's hard to fathom how anyone could have believed him but the story was given an extra lease of life when the US Air Force (USAF) got involved. "They put out a statement saying 'yes, this is one of those flying saucers we've been reading about'," Gill says. "It's kind of hard to imagine why they would have done this." Whatever the reason, within hours a second statement was released announcing that Brazel's find was in fact a weather balloon.

But what was it that had actually crashed at Roswell? Calling it a downed weather balloon was not too far from the truth. The wreckage was part of a top-secret project, MOGUL, described by James Michael Young in a 2020 issue of *Air Power History* as seeking to "develop a technique capable of recording the sound of a nuclear detonation deep within the Soviet Union. The idea was to place acoustic sensors (ie quasi microphones) on balloons that operated at a steady state within the stratosphere." Over 100 balloons were launched between 1947 and 1950. Despite the majority of information concerning MOGUL now being declassified, this has not ended speculation about the Roswell incident.

"By the end of 1947 there were almost 300 UFO sightings"

The modern version of the story was first developed in a 1980 book by Charles Berlitz and William Moore. "This is when other elements get added to the story," Gill explains. "People start saying wreckage and alien bodies were found and that they were taken somewhere to a secret base – it spirals out from there."

But Roswell was not alone in its tale of a crashed alien spacecraft somewhere in the southwest desert. "There were a couple of other crashed saucer cases that were outed as being rather ridiculous scams," says Gill. "For example, there was the Aztec, New Mexico case." This scam involved two confidence tricksters, Silas M Newton and Leo A Gebauer, who attempted to sell 'alien technology' from a supposed crash site. The device created from this 'alien tech' was the 'Magnetic Doodlebug'. "They were these fake machines pretending to show you how to search for gold in the desert," says Gill. However ludicrous the prospect, industrialist Herman A Flader was convinced to invest some $34,000 in the project, according to a contemporary *TIME* magazine article. A popular book by Frank Scully, *Behind the Flying Saucers*, also helped put Newton and Gebauer's scam in the limelight, promoting much of their evidence as real. "Some folks believe that like Roswell it would have been tarred with this brush and that might have been part of the reason it left the pop culture consciousness relatively quickly," Gill concludes.

Above: George Adamski, who claimed to have met aliens and been taken on journeys around the solar system

SECURITY CONCERNS

A year preceding this event the UFO craze became disturbingly real when 25-year-old USAF captain, Thomas F Mantell, was killed chasing a UFO in the skies above Kentucky. According to Carl L DeVito in his book *Space, Life, Science and Stories*, on 7 January 1948 a "silvery and spherical" object was seen in the sky by numerous witnesses, both military and civilian. Four USAF aircraft returning from a routine training mission received a call from Godman Army Airfield to investigate. The leader of the group, the aforementioned Mantell, was not equipped with the oxygen necessary to travel at the height needed. Soon alone and pursuing the strange object, Mantell reported seeing it directly in front of him before it all went horribly wrong. "Mantell stops talking," Gill says. "There's three minutes of radio silence and then

© Alamy; Sheffield Hallam University; Cian Hill

he's gone. They find the plane crashed and his watch had shattered at three minutes after they last had contact." During his last radio contact Mantell had informed the control tower that he was already at 4,572 metres (15,000 feet) and still climbing in an attempt to get a closer look at the object. "The standard explanation is that whatever he was chasing went up past 15,000 feet, he didn't have any oxygen, and he passed out and crashed," continues Gill. "However, rumours started due to the mysterious nature of the object he was chasing. One rumour was that it was some kind of Soviet missile – which given the Cold War context is a fairly natural explanation for the time."

By this point the mysterious objects were beginning to have very real security implications. Project Blue Book was an operation undertaken by the USAF to study the increasing number of UFO reports. Active between 1952 and 1969, it built on earlier USAF projects such as Project Sign and Project Grudge. Blue Book hired astronomer Josef Allen Hynek as supervisor. "They wanted a scientist, someone who wasn't military and who would have a dispassionate attitude," Gill explains. "He's a superstar, he's one of the biggest names in UFO culture." Some 12,618 sightings were reported to Project Blue book, and 701 remained unexplained at the time of its closure. "The man in charge was a captain called Ed Roper," Clarke explains. "He was the person who effectively coined the acronym 'UFO'. From the point of view of the USAF they didn't have any evidence that these things were extraterrestrial. If they saw something on radar that couldn't be identified, they needed to make sure it wasn't a Russian aircraft or missile. They came up with UFOs to try and get away from the term 'flying saucer'." But it wasn't that easy for Roper to dissociate the public obsession with flying saucers from the objects suspected to be flying over the USA. "What we see is that the phrase 'flying saucer' starts being used less, and effectively now UFO means the same as flying saucer," says Clarke.

FULL-ON FRENZY

Despite the investigative efforts of Blue Book, on the night of 19 July 1952 one of the most sensationalist and bizarre UFO reports of the 1950s occurred. Air traffic control at Washington National Airport and Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland simultaneously noticed a cluster of seven blips, which began moving slowly but soon sped up. At air traffic control, two of the operators looked out of the window and saw a bright light moving across the sky. "Look at that," one said. "If you believe in flying saucers, that could sure be one." Panicked staff at Andrews noticed the strange objects were heading for the capital and the White House, and two F-94 jets were immediately scrambled. Yet as soon as they came close to intercepting the mysterious objects, they simply vanished. "It was these sightings that got Winston Churchill interested," says Clarke. "He fired off a famous memo saying: 'What's all this stuff about flying saucers? Tell me the truth'."

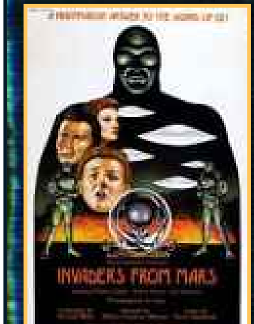
Below: A 1952 photograph showing a cluster of four bright objects in the sky over Salem, Massachusetts

Above: This 'saucer' was supposedly found at West Orange quarry

"The staff at Andrews noticed strange objects heading for the White House"

SAUCERS ON THE SCREEN

As UFO-mania gripped the West, filmmakers got in on the act: here are six of the best and downright peculiar 50s sci-fi flicks!



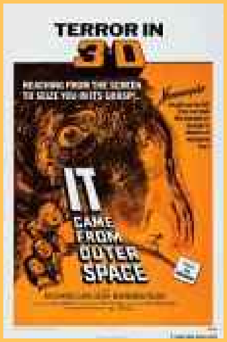
INVADERS FROM MARS (1953)

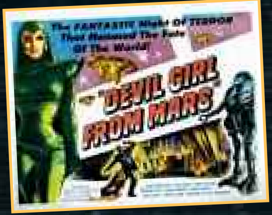
+ A haunting, dreamlike film, *Invaders From Mars* follows a young boy who witnesses a spacecraft land in a local sandpit. When his parents investigate they become taken over by a malevolent alien force. A film more interested in exploring a child's nightmares than an extraterrestrial attack, it quickly developed a cult reputation.

[redacted]

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (1953)

+ The first movie released by Universal in 3D, this thought-provoking sci-fi film was based on a story by Ray Bradbury. It follows a schoolteacher who witnesses a meteorite-like object land in the desert surrounding a small Arizona town. As strange things begin to happen, tension brews between the townsfolk and whatever is at large in the desert.


TERROR IN 3D
IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE


The FANTASTIC Night of TERROR That Menaced The Fate Of The World!
DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS

DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS (1954)

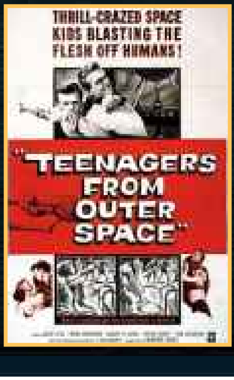
+ A campy classic, the titular 'devil girl' is Nyah, who (clad in provocative black leather) wants to kidnap the male population of Earth so they can mate with the all-female population of Mars. Being a British film, the action takes place almost entirely in and around a local pub.

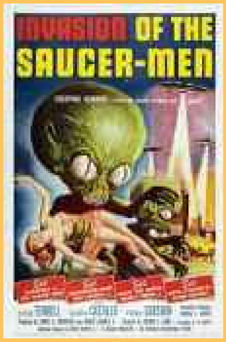
[redacted]

TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE (1959)

+ This romp tapped into the flying saucer craze as well as the new obsession with juvenile delinquency that led to a boom of B-movies aimed at teenagers. A group of aliens land their saucer on Earth, with one young invader then falling in with the local teens.

[redacted]


THRILL-CRAZED SPACE KIDS BLASTING THE FLESH OFF HUMANS!
"TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE"



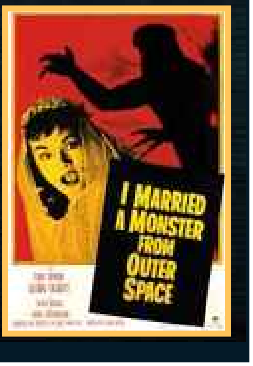
INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN (1957)

+ This quirky little B-movie is best remembered for its alien designs, with oversized heads and huge bulging eyes. With its tongue placed firmly in its cheek, it follows a group of teenagers who repel an alien attack on their town.

[redacted]

I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE (1958)

+ Nowhere near as ludicrous as its title would suggest, this film follows Marge, a newlywed who comes to believe that her husband, Bill, is not quite the man he was when she first met him. Of course Bill, along with the other men in the town, is revealed to be an alien in a thought-provoking film that continues to be a cult favourite among sci-fi fans.


I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE

By this point the UFO frenzy was already in full swing. Pulp magazines were brimming with sci-fi flying saucer stories, and the 1951 film, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, depicted a flying saucer landing in Washington – preempting the 1952 sightings. However, that movie also highlights another curious aspect of the UFO craze. "In this film you've got the idea that because mankind was in danger of destroying ourselves in a nuclear war, if aliens exist they must care about us," explains Clarke. "They'd be coming here to try and stop this war."

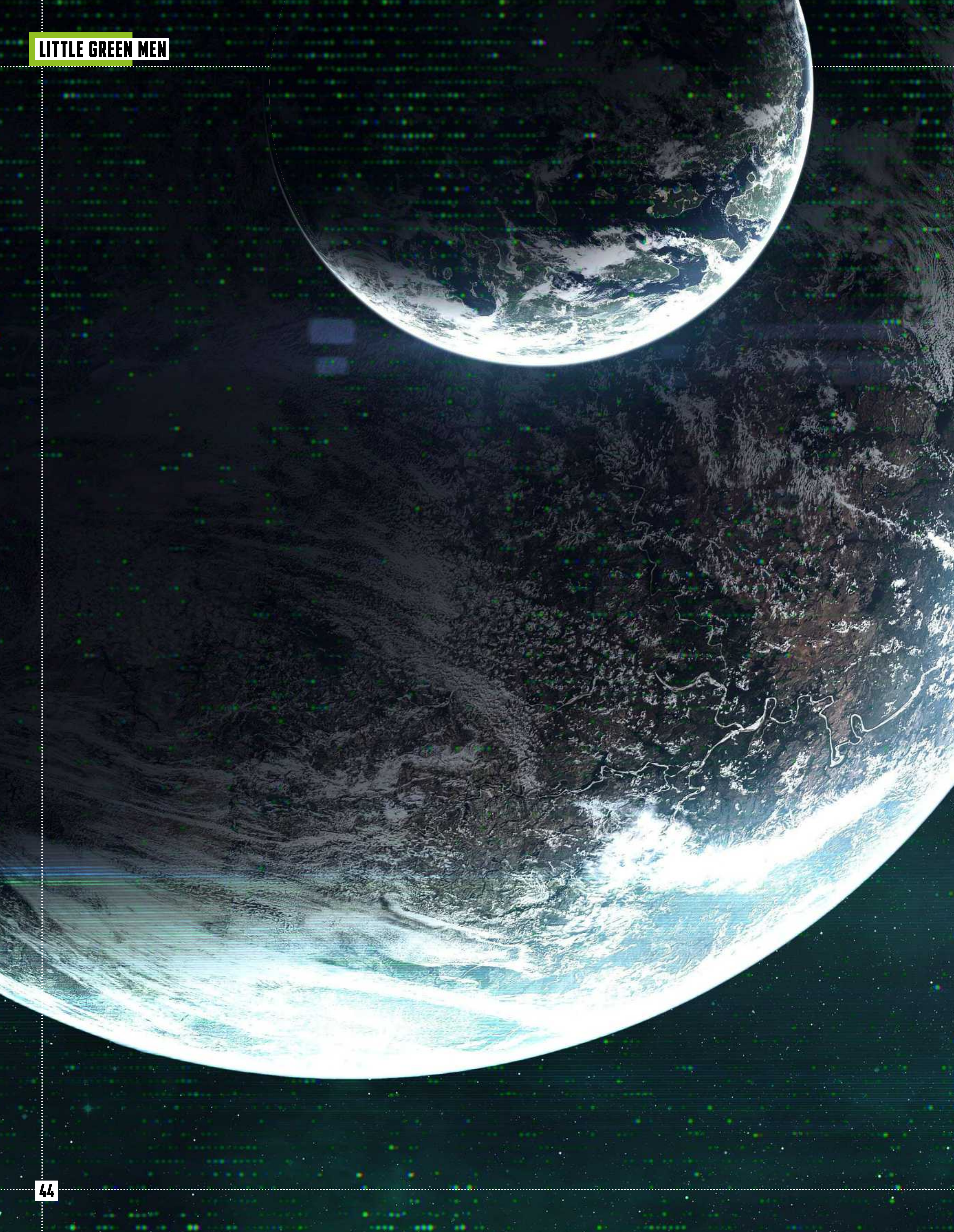
In 1953, Polish-born George Adamski collaborated with author Desmond Leslie on the book *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, which details a number of 'true' encounters that Adamski had with a visitor from Venus. "It was Nordic-looking, tall, blonde, wearing a classic 1950s ski suit," Clarke explains. "It was benevolent, it wanted to save us from destruction. Adamski later went on trips around the solar system to Venus, Mars, Saturn – all the places that we know there is no intelligent life." Nonetheless, Adamski's book was popular and began the 'contactees' movement. "There was a slew of books during the 1950s from people like Adamski who claimed they'd met aliens who were here to help us escape nuclear destruction," explains Clarke. "The intelligence services were interested in these people because they often described being taken to a sort of socialist paradise and they thought they were spreading Soviet propaganda."

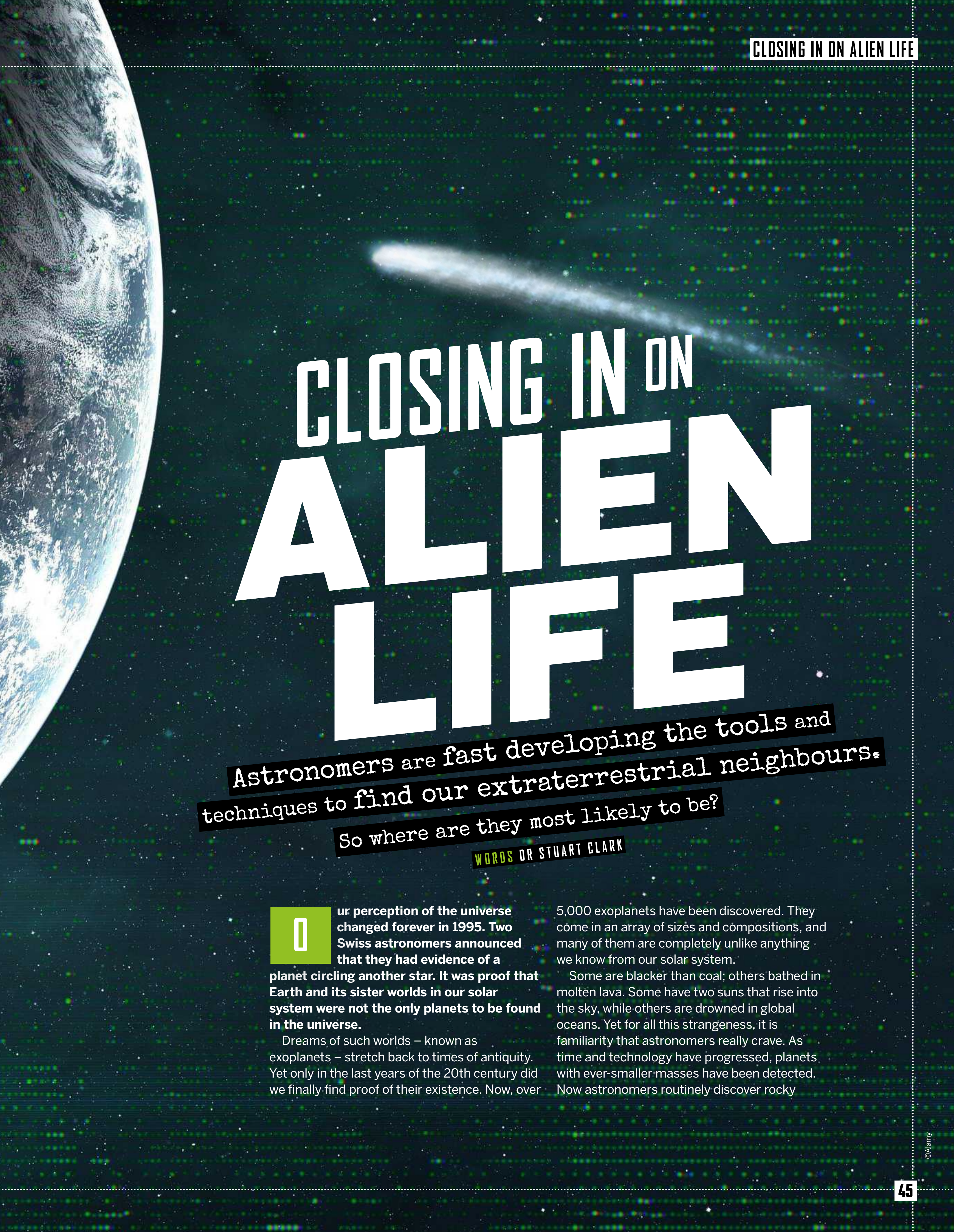
The remainder of the 1950s was defined by America's obsession with UFOs. There are numerous other sightings this article could have covered, and we've only scratched the surface of this unique period. But the question that remains to be answered is exactly why in 1947 did Americans start watching the skies? "I'm very influenced by the psycho-social hypothesis, a lot of which is associated with a very good British UFO magazine called *Magonia*," says Gill. "We'd just had a war where for the first time we'd had a great deal of air combat. It was very clear that airpower was the future of warfare. You also had people like Ray Palmer, who in the 1930s wrote sci-fi and in the 1950s and 1960s was writing 'true' sci-fi stories. It makes total sense that flying saucers came along at this time."

Perhaps, then, it is safe to infer that the UFO sensation is ultimately a uniquely Cold War phenomenon. "The whole UFO myth emerged from the Cold War," Clarke concludes. "Although there was this general belief in pulp fiction prior to this, they didn't take the form that they did – extraterrestrial visitors in flying disc-shaped objects – until the Cold War. It's a combination of things: the spectre of nuclear war, government secrecy, and people's fears of technology."

Right: The sci-fi obsession of 1950s America spread across all age groups

© Getty; Alamy





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CLOSING IN ON ALIEN LIFE

Astronomers are fast developing the tools and techniques to find our extraterrestrial neighbours. So where are they most likely to be?

WORDS DR STUART CLARK

Our perception of the universe changed forever in 1995. Two Swiss astronomers announced that they had evidence of a planet circling another star. It was proof that Earth and its sister worlds in our solar system were not the only planets to be found in the universe.

Dreams of such worlds – known as exoplanets – stretch back to times of antiquity. Yet only in the last years of the 20th century did we finally find proof of their existence. Now, over 5,000 exoplanets have been discovered. They come in an array of sizes and compositions, and many of them are completely unlike anything we know from our solar system.

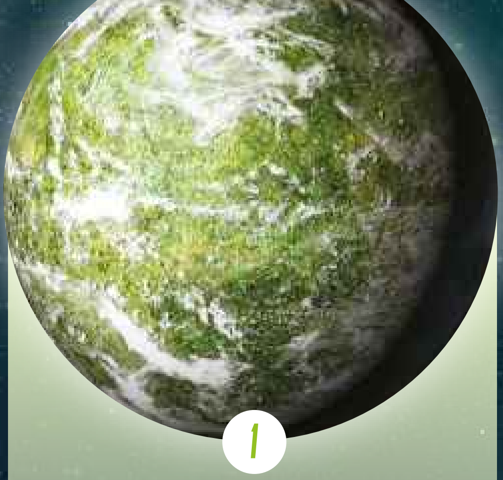
Some are blacker than coal; others bathed in molten lava. Some have two suns that rise into the sky, while others are drowned in global oceans. Yet for all this strangeness, it is familiarity that astronomers really crave. As time and technology have progressed, planets with ever-smaller masses have been detected. Now astronomers routinely discover rocky

THE FIVE EXOPLANETS MOST LIKELY TO HARBOUR LIFE

Of the worlds discovered so far, which are most likely to be inhabited?

+ With over 5,000 confirmed exoplanets out there, the scope of their landscapes is extensive indeed, and some are more likely to host life than others. Using the tools of astronomy we currently have at our disposal, we are already able to determine which planets are most likely to host life and get an early idea of what that life would be like.

*Journey times with current technology



1

PLANET NAME

HD 85512 b

DESCRIPTION

With 3.6 times the mass of Earth, HD 85512 b generates 1.4 times the gravity of our world, meaning that living things would need to be stronger to stand upright.

DISTANCE

36 light-years

JOURNEY TIME*

625,278 years

2

PLANET NAME

Kepler-62 e

DESCRIPTION

With a year that lasts about 122 Earth-days, Kepler-62 e is a rocky world circling near the inner edge of its star's habitable zone. Computer models suggest it could be covered in steamy oceans.

DISTANCE

1,200 light-years

JOURNEY TIME*

20,842,599 years

planets of a similar size to Earth, and inevitably the question they are asking is: do any of them host life?

Professor Sara Seager at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the world's most respected planet-hunters, has put together an equation that can be used to estimate how many planets with detectable signs of life will be discovered in the next few years. It produces an intriguing result. Plug in various figures, such as the number of stars that are being studied and the fraction of them likely to be orbited by a rocky planet that's in the star's habitable zone – where the temperature's not too high or low for life – and it predicts that we'll find two planets inhabited by alien life within the next decade.

Seager's equation is a variation on the famous Drake Equation, which estimates the number of technologically advanced civilisations there are likely to be in our galaxy. Her aim was to bring the idea of hunting for alien life into the public consciousness. "I wanted the world to know that we are doing the real search for alien life," Seager says.

A couple of planets may not sound like a lot, but the impact of finding even one inhabited planet cannot be overstated: "People have wanted to know whether there is life on other worlds for hundreds and thousands of years," explains Seager.

Traditionally, this question has been the realm of speculation or guesswork. Now, however, various projects have set about to find the answer.

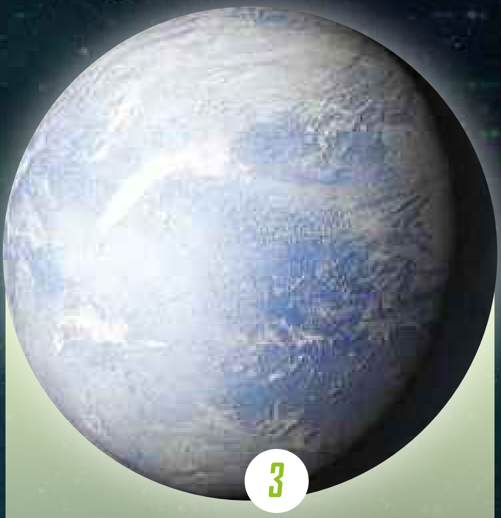
Since 2009, NASA's planet-hunting telescope, Kepler, had been finding new planets by allowing astronomers to spot the reduction in light from their parent star as they pass in front of it. Before the space telescope malfunctioned, it had spotted 134 confirmed exoplanets, while a further few thousand were currently unconfirmed.

GETTING CLOSER

The big challenge is being able to characterise the planets well enough to know whether they show signs of life. But that is a task that is getting closer to being achieved.

NASA announced it was able to peer at one alien world, Kepler-7 b, using its Kepler and Spitzer space telescopes and create a map of the clouds in its atmosphere. These observations have also shown that this exoplanet is too hot for life as we know it – its temperature is a searing 816-982°C. But it's a huge step forward nonetheless, and no mean feat, given this world is 100 light-years away.

Two subsequent missions have taken us much further in our hunt for alien life. The European Space Agency (ESA) created the Characterising Exoplanets Satellite (CHEOPS), which was launched in 2019. Its aim is to study nearby star systems that are already known to have planets. Its goal is to measure those



3

PLANET NAME

Kepler-62 f

DESCRIPTION

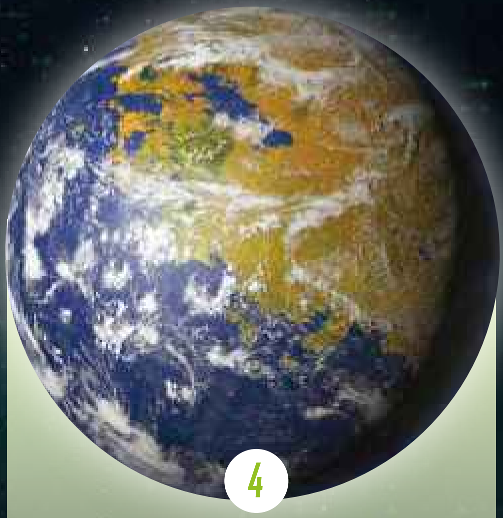
Sister world to Kepler-62 e, this planet is on the outer edge of habitability. It too could be covered in ocean, but frozen into pack ice. From its surface, its parent star would look peachy-orange in colour.

DISTANCE

1,200 light-years

JOURNEY TIME*

20,842,599 years



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PLANET NAME

Gliese 581 g

DESCRIPTION

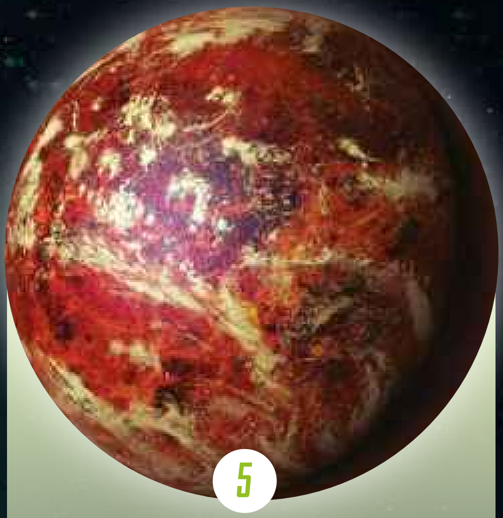
Square in its star's habitable zone, this rocky planet is one of the best candidates for a living world – if it exists. Prominent research teams disagree on how to interpret the data surrounding it.

DISTANCE

20 light-years

JOURNEY TIME*

347,377 years



5

PLANET NAME

Tau Ceti e

DESCRIPTION

Orbiting at the innermost edge of its star's habitable zone, Tau Ceti e could be a Venus-like planet with a runaway greenhouse effect. Any life forms would need to withstand temperatures of around 70°C.

DISTANCE

12 lighty-ears

JOURNEY TIME*

206,689 years

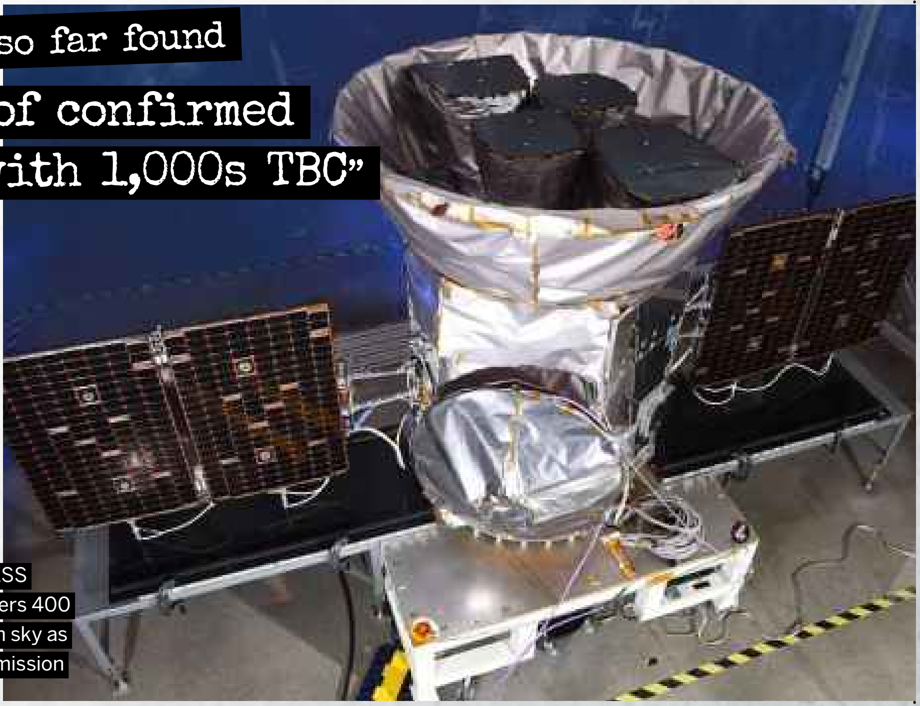
planets' radii and look for others that have so far escaped detection.

Meanwhile, NASA produced the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), which launched in 2018. Using four onboard wide-angle telescopes, its aim was to survey 500,000 stars spread across the sky. After two mission extensions (it was originally meant to operate for two years), TESS has so far found hundreds of confirmed exoplanets, with thousands more still waiting to be confirmed.

Both missions use the 'transit' method of exoplanet detection, just like Kepler. But the more sensitive the telescope's detectors, the smaller the planets that can be registered. Seager was in no doubt about TESS' abilities. "If there is a rocky planet transiting a small star in the habitable zone, we will find it," she said.

This is because TESS is able to measure the diameter of the planet, based on how long it takes for the starlight to fade as the planet

> "TESS has so far found hundreds of confirmed exoplanets, with 1,000s TBC"



Right: The TESS telescope covers 400 times as much sky as any previous mission

©Alamy; Orbital ATK

Left: The James Webb Space Telescope when it was being constructed. It has since provided valuable information about the atmospheres of larger planets

crosses the edge of the star. But to determine whether that planet bears life requires astronomers to analyse the planet's atmosphere and look for the gases that signify the presence of life. On Earth, oxygen and methane are clear markers that life is widespread across our planet.

Neither CHEOPS nor TESS can detect atmospheric gases. Instead, that requires a very special mission – and when astronomers say 'very special', that inevitably equates to 'risky and expensive'.

Early this century, optimism for such a mission was running high on both sides of the Atlantic: ESA was developing a mission concept named Darwin, and NASA was working on an equivalent called Terrestrial Planet Finder (TPF). Both missions were designed to study the atmospheres of nearby Earth-sized worlds to look for the gases that would signify the existence of life.

ESA and NASA poured tens of millions of euros and dollars into developing the technology that would be needed. They were bold missions, envisioning a small flotilla of space telescopes working in conjunction to pick out the faint spot of light coming from an Earth-sized planet.

By 2005, the lack of technological maturity was giving everyone involved pause for thought. Then the recession hit and the money really dried up. But all was not lost. NASA and ESA (along with the Canadian Space Agency (CSA)) launched the James Webb Space Telescope in 2018. This giant mirror has been providing fascinating information about the atmospheres of some of the larger planets, clocking up valuable experience for when it comes to doing the same with smaller planets – the ones most likely to host our alien neighbours. .

SHADY BUSINESS

Quietly, NASA reopened the door to alien-hunting missions by setting up two teams to study new ways of building TPF-like systems – Starshade. The aim is to unfurl a large space 'umbrella' that blocks the light from a target star, but allows the planet's light to skirt around the edges. By examining the wavelengths of this light, it will reveal the gases in the planet's atmosphere and therefore indicate whether or not there are signs of life. The Starshade Rendezvous Probe is due to launch 2029.

Seager has been an integral part of the Starshade team and had this to say at the start of development; "Before, we could only say that we think habitable planets are out there, but they are not within reach and we may not be able to find them. Now, for the first time in human history, we're on the verge of having the opportunity to search for signs of life." And that is a goal worth pursuing.

SHOPPING LIST FOR A HABITABLE PLANET

To host life as we know it, any world needs at least these bare essentials

WATER

+ Life needs a solvent to dissolve the necessary biological chemicals. Water's ideal, because it remains liquid over a wide temperature range.

WARMTH

+ Some heat is needed to keep water liquid. A planet's temperature depends on the brightness of its star, how close it is, and the gases in the planet's atmosphere.

CARBON

+ Carbon is an excellent construction material for life. It provides the backbone for our DNA because it is strong and versatile in the way it bonds to other atoms.

PROTECTION

+ Having a magnetic field in addition to an ozone layer helps to protect life from the radiation that occurs naturally in space, and which can destroy DNA.

Below: Could current and future technology finally answer the question many have wondered – is there other life out there?

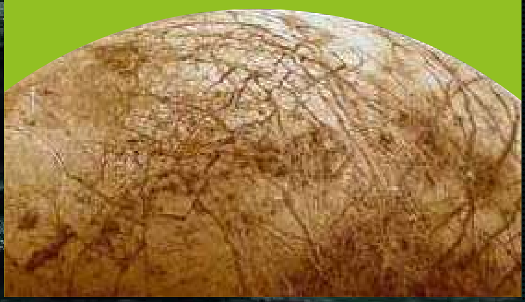
> “By examining the wavelengths of this light, it will reveal the gases in the planet’s atmosphere and therefore indicate whether or not there are signs of life”

LIFE ELSEWHERE IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

Could extraterrestrials be lurking much closer to home?

+ There is probably more water underneath the icy surface of Jupiter’s moon, Europa, than in all the oceans on Earth. NASA’s Curiosity rover has also been turning up more and more mineralogical evidence that water was abundant on Mars in the past. If there was water, perhaps there was life, too.

Finding life elsewhere in the solar system would enable astrobiologists to compare the chemistry of that life to Earth’s. For instance, can life exist using a different molecule to DNA? If so, it suggests that there would be many paths to life, and so life should be widespread throughout the galaxy.



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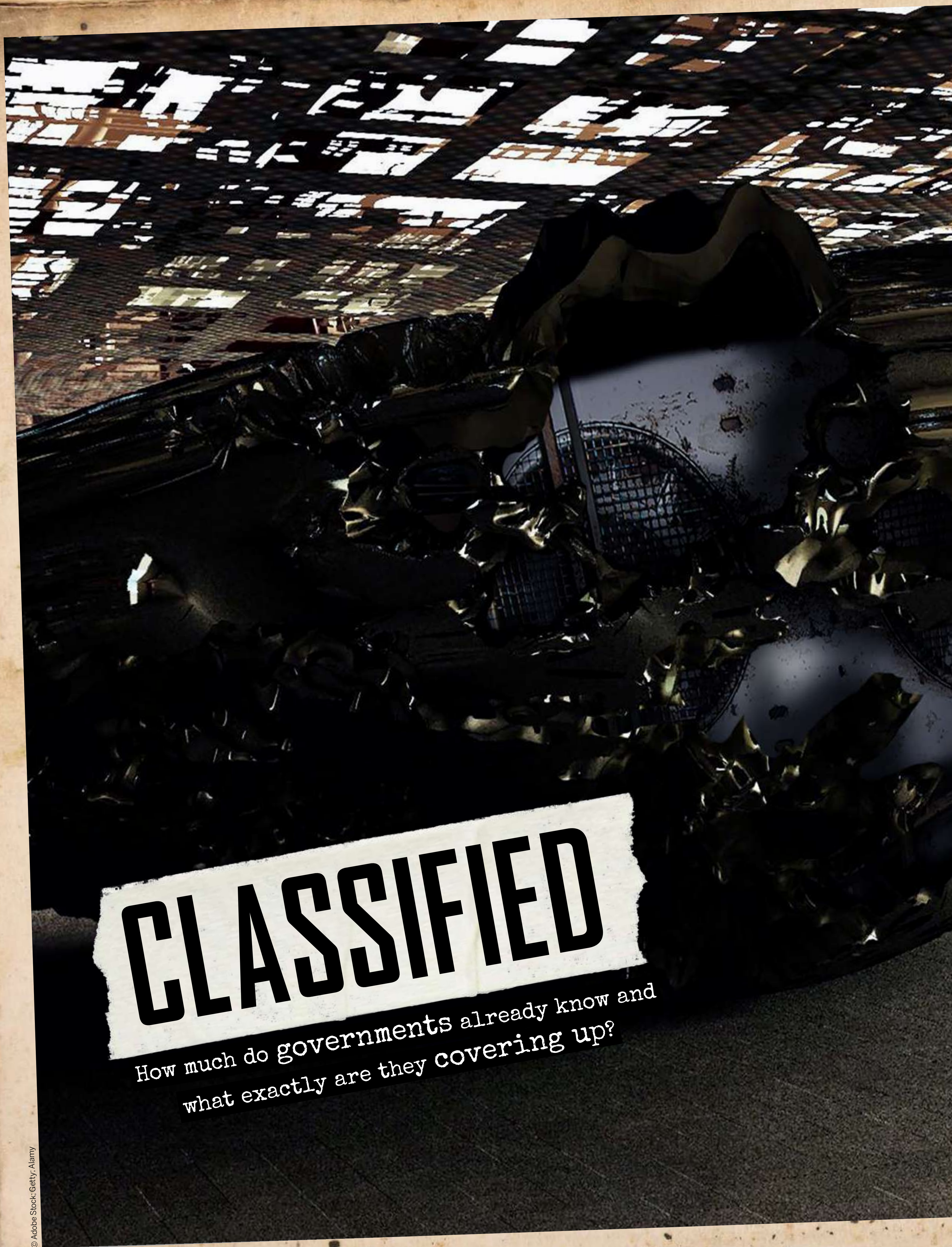

CLASSIFIED

How much do **governments** already know and what exactly are they **covering up?**

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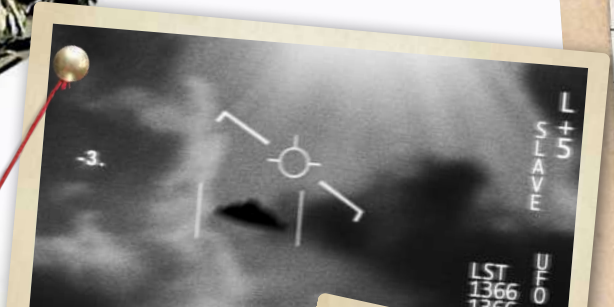
CLASSIFIED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52...Top secret!

60...The truth about the Roswell files

68...What are they hiding?

TOP SECRET!

Governments have concerned themselves with the prospect of alien life on Earth for decades, but they are all seemingly reluctant to reveal their classified projects with the general public...

WORDS KATE CHERRELL

In the field of UFO and UAP research, concerns about government secrecy have been the root cause of an ever-evolving battle, as official departments continue to conduct and conceal projects regarding the nature of extraterrestrial life. As evidence is leaked and documents declassified, nations can't help but contemplate the extent that governments suppress information regarding extraterrestrial contact with the Earth.

© Getty

PROJECT BLUE BOOK

Project Blue Book was the longest-running official scientific enquiry into UFO phenomena, operating between March 1952 and December 1969

+ During its time in operation, Project Blue Book collated over 12,000 reports of UFO phenomena, nearly all of which were deemed to be explainable by natural means; aircraft, stars, clouds, etc. However, 701 reports were classified as unexplained, even after exhaustive scientific and military analysis. These reports were archived and hidden from public view until the Freedom of Information Act allowed for the distribution and declassification of these documents, albeit with identifying personal details omitted. Initially directed by US Air Force officer, Edward J Ruppelt, and based within Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, Project Blue Book's goals were to scientifically study reports and data relating to UFOs, but also to discern whether UFOs posed a serious threat to national security.

Following the closure of Project Blue Book, its findings were underwhelming to ufologists and fed into theories of government coverups relating to the true nature of Project Blue Book's works. The final review, conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, argued that no UFO report constituted a legitimate threat to national security, that no proposed evidence offered adequate proof of technologies or abilities beyond the Earth's comprehension, and no reports deemed to be 'unidentified' truly represented any craft or vehicle of extraterrestrial origin.

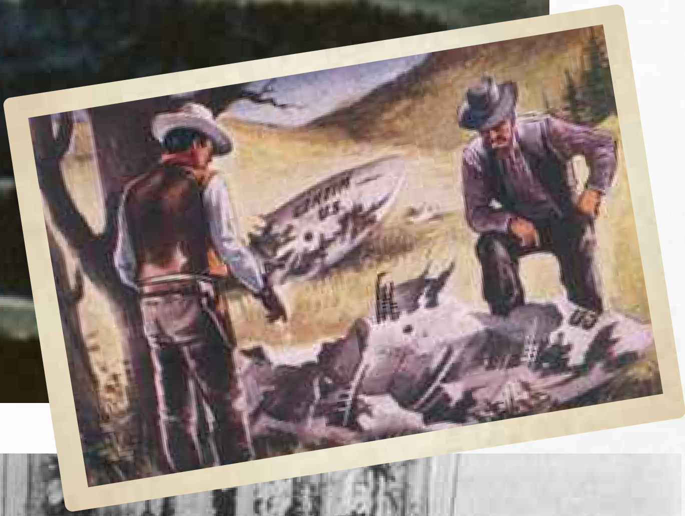
Above: Hector Quintanilla and other United States Air Force staff members who presided over Project Blue Book

Right: Project Grudge was a far less open-minded and inquisitive approach to UFO research, discarding and dismissing all reports that were presented to the members

Most governmental projects relating to the search and monitoring of unidentifiable flying objects and observations of alien contact originated during the period of the Cold War, where military and civilian reports of mysterious airborne phenomena spiked. At the height of the Cold War, between 1947 and 1969, the US Airforce alone received over 12,000 reports concerning UFO sightings, leading to the requirement of dedicated departments and projects to handle the enormous caseload.

While many of the reports during this period have been attributed to hysteria, unfamiliarity with aerial and weather phenomena, and instances of Soviet aircraft reconnaissance, the question of 'what are they hiding from us?' remains.

Since the first dedicated UFO programmes, decommissioned files have been set upon by the public and researchers alike, each seeking proof that aliens have interacted with humans, or have been monitored and detained by highly armed and secretive facilities, such as Area 51. The nature of these governmental projects is deliberately concealed from public view, which has invariably raised suspicions of coverups, conspiracies, and disavowal of whistleblowers. Most UFO projects are conducted by military departments, whose concealment of any studies is infamous, with many reports bound in red tape for decades or longer. NATO, the CIA, and other worldwide government bodies have been accused of conspiring to suppress credible reports of UFO sightings and human interactions with aliens, either for military or political gain, or in an attempt to quell hysteria. While UFO study groups and independent researchers may air their suspicions to smaller audiences, many individuals holding governmental positions have also spoken out about the existence of secret projects, alien visitations, abductions and the validity of UFO concerns. Some of these big names include the chief of Britain's defence staff, Admiral Lord Hill-Norton; CIA director, Admiral Roscoe H Hillenkoetter; Canadian defence minister, Paul Hellyer; and astronauts Gordon Cooper and Edgar Mitchell. While governments and military organisations avoid dialogue about the existence of UFOs with many of the world's greatest scientists associated



Below: The Roswell crash has become synonymous with government coverups

Bottom: US Air Force officer Irving Newton holds up metallic debris of a supposed alien spacecraft in July 1947, originally reported as being a weather balloon

with searching for intelligent life on other planets, we can't help but wonder what revelations are concealed within bunkers and archives, hidden from public view.

THE FIRST INVESTIGATION

In 1947, civilian pilot Kenneth Arnold claimed to have encountered nine blue and white objects flying in a V formation above Mount Rainier in Washington State. This bold claim, made by an individual well-versed in aircraft and flight, led to the formation of the first US governmental investigation into UFO sightings. Initially called 'Project Saucer', this seminal study was christened 'Project Sign' and ran throughout most of 1948. The goal of Project Sign was to collate, assess and distribute all relevant UFO sightings and information to government departments, theorising that any proof of extraterrestrial contact would pose a viable threat to national security.

In 1949, the US Air Force released a paper prepared by the Intelligence Division of the Air Materiel Command, which stated that the majority of UFO sightings could be explained and identified as terrestrial aircraft. However, a handful of sightings were unable to be completely dispelled, and the report recommended the ongoing study and investigation of all UFO sightings. Considering the uncertainty of Cold War warfare, many sightings of unknown flying objects are thought to have been Soviet aircraft, rather than craft from another universe. Despite many questions lingering over the true nature of many of these reports, General Hoyt Vandenberg, the chief of staff of the US Air Force, ordered the closure of the project, arguing that it had not provided sufficient evidence of UFOs to merit continuation. A secondary reason for this closure was the belief that a collection of UFO reports could be weaponised by foreign powers to incite chaos and panic within the populous, thus creating a legitimate security threat.

Project Sign was followed by Project Grudge in 1949, a further study of UFO reports that took a hardline approach, dismissing the legitimacy of sightings. Not only did the project dismiss all reports, but it quantified the persons and reasonings behind these sightings, arguing that all UFO sightings were as the result of direct misidentification, 'a mild form of mass-hysteria and war nerves', individuals who wish to

> "Project Sign was followed by Project Grudge in 1949, a further study of UFO reports that took a hardline approach"

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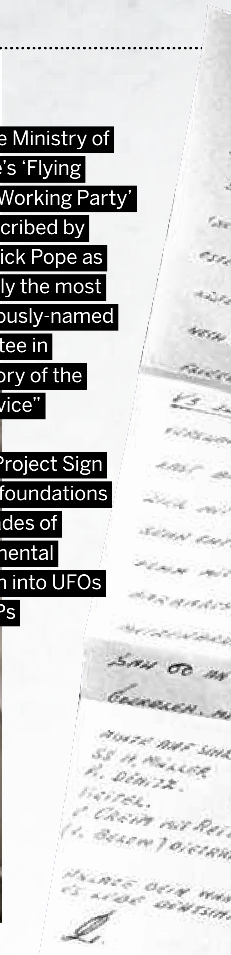


Left The Ministry of Defence's 'Flying Saucer Working Party' was described by writer Nick Pope as "arguably the most marvellously-named committee in the history of the civil service"

Right: Project Sign laid the foundations for decades of governmental research into UFOs and UAPs

'perpetuate a hoax or seek publicity' or alternatively, 'psychopathological persons'. Unlike the studies that preceded and followed Project Grudge, it is regarded as an exercise in public relations, rather that scientific study. The project has been criticised by many, including intelligence officer Edward J Ruppelt, who was also heavily involved in Project Blue Book, arguing that the project lacked an objective, scientific approach. The recommendations of Project Grudge's report included a suggestion that all Air Force personnel should receive mandatory training in identifying common astronomical phenomena.

UAPS IN THE UK

The 'Flying Saucer Working Party' (FSWP) was a nickname given to a group of intelligence experts who were gathered by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to investigate reports of UFOs and extraterrestrial contact within the UK. Established in 1950 by the MOD's chief scientific adviser, radar scientist Sir Henry Tizard, the FSWP was the first official study into UFO sightings within the UK. Sir Henry was curious and open-minded about the nature of UFOs, and insisted that such reports should never be dismissed without exhaustive scientific study. In 1951, the FSWP published a substantial report covering every UFO incident reported to the MOD and the determination of its cause or origin. Frustratingly for UFO enthusiasts, this official dossier argued that every single instance of extraterrestrial contact or sighting could be explained by natural terrestrial means, either being a conventional aircraft, bird, or a simple means of deliberate hoax.

GROUND ZERO

While many sectors of the American military have been associated with extraterrestrial contact and study, one notorious airbase is synonymous with UFOs and governmental coverup. Area 51 is a highly classified military facility in the arid Nevada desert, close to Roswell. Area 51 is impenetrable; entering the facility's airspace requires prior permission and the entire perimeter is monitored by armed guards. The extreme security of this fortified base has been the focus of public suspicion since the 1940s.

Even today, internet communities enjoy recurring jokes of 'storming Area 51', attempting to rouse mobs to overcome the facility's security and reveal the truth about their involvement with UFOs. In September 2019, a Facebook event organised by 21-year-old student Matty Roberts went viral, as millions of users registered their interest and attendance in his post, which stated that believers in UFOs

> "With Area 51's sustained security, secrecy and armed military presence, it is little wonder that interest in the base, and rumours of alien capture, remain"

MICROCASSETTE RECORDER
B

RENDLESHAM FOREST

A Suffolk forest holds the infamous nickname of 'Britain's Roswell'

+ In the UK, Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk bears the moniker of 'Britain's Roswell', being a former military site associated with alien contact and governmental coverups. In December 1980, a close encounter was reported in the woodland close to RAF Woodbridge, experienced not by trespassers, but by military personnel themselves.

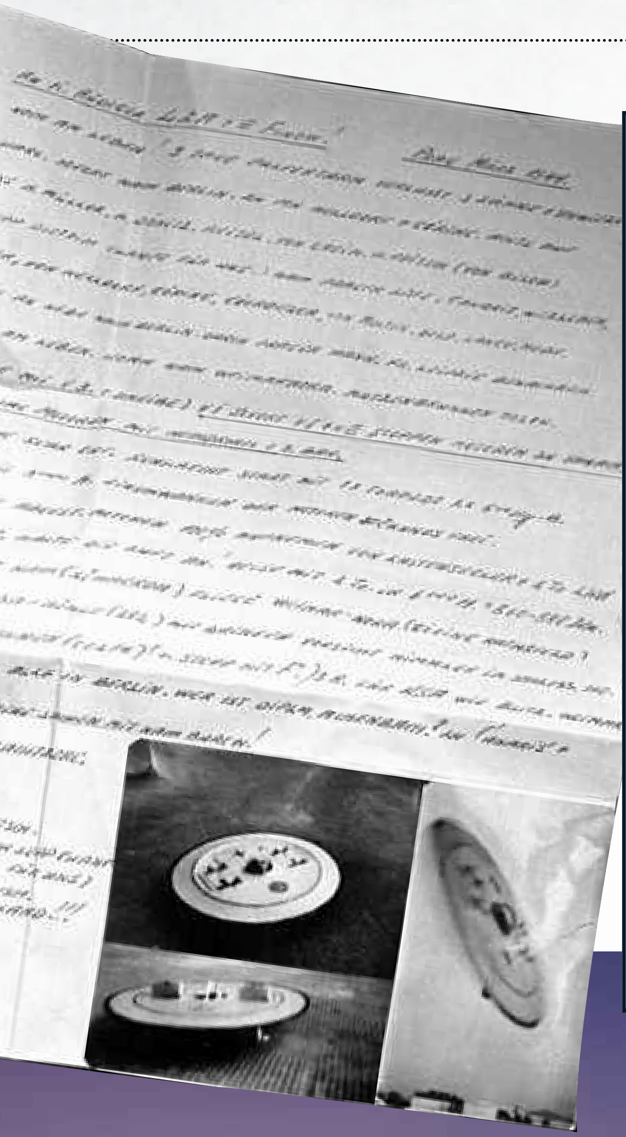
At approximately 3am on 26 December, RAF military personnel were patrolling the perimeter of the base when they noticed strange lights emitting from above the forest's treetops. Concerned that an aircraft may have encountered trouble, the men entered the forest in order to investigate further. What faced them was not a terrestrial aircraft, but a large silver spacecraft, surrounded by a ring of flashing lights. Two days after the men's discovery, RAF personnel returned to the site to assess their claims, finding no sign of the craft, but raised levels of radiation and further unexplained lights in the distance, one of which emanated from the same point as the initial report.

Investigations made by Lieutenant Colonel Halt and staff have provided substantial first-hand reports for investigators and debunkers alike. While Halt attests that the lights in the sky were hovering and producing their own beams of light, others have argued that these lights were simply bright stars, and an especially bright, flashing light seen on both nights could be attributed to the nearby Orfordness Lighthouse.

Forty years later, and despite sustained arguments to the contrary, Halt has stuck to his story and continues to talk about his extraterrestrial encounter in Rendlesham Forest. Speaking in 2015, Halt presented new evidence to support his claims, saying "I have confirmation that [radar operators] saw the object go across their 60-mile scope in two or three seconds, travelling at thousands of miles an hour".

The Rendlesham Forest
UFO Tr

Above UFO enthusiasts continue to visit Rendlesham, hoping for a glimpse of the strange craft



Left Many official studies have been launched to investigate claims of alien life on Earth

© Getty; Alamy

THE ADVANCED AEROSPACE THREAT IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program, or AATIP, was a previously secret US governmental study into the existence and nature of UFOs

Right: The AATIP's substantial findings have never been made publicly available

+ The AATIP project boasted substantial funding of $22 million, which was used by the US Defense Intelligence Agency between 2007 and 2012. Established to investigate UFOs/UAPs, the programme had been defunct for five years before being publicly acknowledged in 2017 by the United States government. Unlike other earlier governmental projects, the findings of the AATIP remain hidden from public view. However, it is known that the project produced a substantial 494-page report, known as the 'Ten Month Report', documenting worldwide UFO sightings covering a period of over 70 years. The findings or approaches of this infamous report remain cloaked in mystery, but are said to include plans and extensive scientific analysis of a vast array of extraterrestrial encounters.

While the AATIP was closed after five functional years, it was implied by official and public news outlets that other programmes of UFO study exist within the US government, deliberately concealed from the public. These suspicions were confirmed in 2020 when a similar project, the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena Task Force, was publicly named by former US Army counterintelligence special agent, Luis Elizondo.

Outside official governmental organisations, a group of studies classified under the name of 'SETI' have been conducting substantial and significant research in the field of UFOs. Rather than a singular operation, SETI, or the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, is a collective term for academic or scientific studies for UFOs or intelligent life forms beyond our planet. These studies may involve radio waves, measuring electromagnetic frequencies or the use of highly-powered telescopes. These independent projects have been recorded since the advent of radio in the early 20th century and continue to this day, with a handful of high-profile projects making minor headlines in the process. Most recently in 2015, Stephen Hawking co-announced the foundation of the Breakthrough Listen Project, a heavily-funded ten-year project that intends to search for intelligent extraterrestrial life forms through the use of telescopes and highly-specialised technologies. Based in Berkeley SETI Research Center at the University of California, it is regarded as the most developed and comprehensive search for extraterrestrial intelligence to this day. Earlier studies attributed to SETI include experiments made by Nikola Tesla in 1896, whereby he proposed that a modified version of his wireless transmission system could be manipulated to open communications with beings on Mars. Other substantial studies have been conducted within scientific institutions and university campuses worldwide, including the 'Sentinel' project at Harvard University, the 'Microwave Observing Program' (MOP) at NASA and 1979's 'Search for Extraterrestrial Radio Emissions from Nearby Developed Intelligent Populations' (SERENDIP) project, housed within Berkeley SETI Research Center.

should 'Storm Area 51' as 'they can't stop all of us'. Interest in the event was so great that is was considered to be of national concern, with a state of emergency declared in two states. However, when the proposed date of the event came around, the crowds failed to materialise and only two Dutch YouTubers made a pass at the base, for which they were both arrested and deported. Arrests notwithstanding, such jokes are not without consequence, as in January of the same year, a man attempting to breach the perimeter was shot on site, demonstrating that Area 51 remains closed to outsiders.

Public interest in Area 51 originated in July 1947, when reports of a 'flying saucer' crash at Roswell made national news. Metallic debris was recovered from an area close to the desert town, which was quickly gathered and dismissed by authorities as the aftermath of a downed weather balloon. While rumours of alien involvement persisted it wasn't until the 1970s, when a group of UFO researchers interviewed several individuals relating to the crash and recovery, that the idea really took off. According to their reports, the silver material found at Roswell was not a weather balloon, but the remnants of an alien spacecraft that had crashed into the desert that July. Not only had the material been salvaged by the American military, but so too had the deceased bodies of its alien pilots; the dismissal of the crash as that of a weather balloon was a deliberate deception in order to avoid mass hysteria.

Accusations of conspiracy were rife well into the 1990s, when the US military retracted the previous statement, and admitted that the 'weather balloon' had actually been a nuclear test surveillance balloon that was part of Project Mogul, whereby the military intended to detect the signals emitting from Soviet nuclear weapons tests. However, these official statements and admissions of coverups have done little to dispel the interest of ufologists and conspiracy theorists, many of whom still believe that Area 51 is a facility for the storage and study of aliens. With Area 51's sustained security, secrecy and armed military presence, it is little wonder that interest in the base, and rumours of alien capture, remain.

> "The release of The Pentagon Tapes in April 2020 has been one of the largest and most revelatory events in recent governmental UFO history"

Bottom left Our interest in UFOs and alien life has grown stronger over the years, and with recent government releases leaving more questions unanswered, will we ever know if we're alone in the universe?

Right: Do government agencies continue to investigate and conceal UFO encounters on Earth?

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© Alamy; Getty

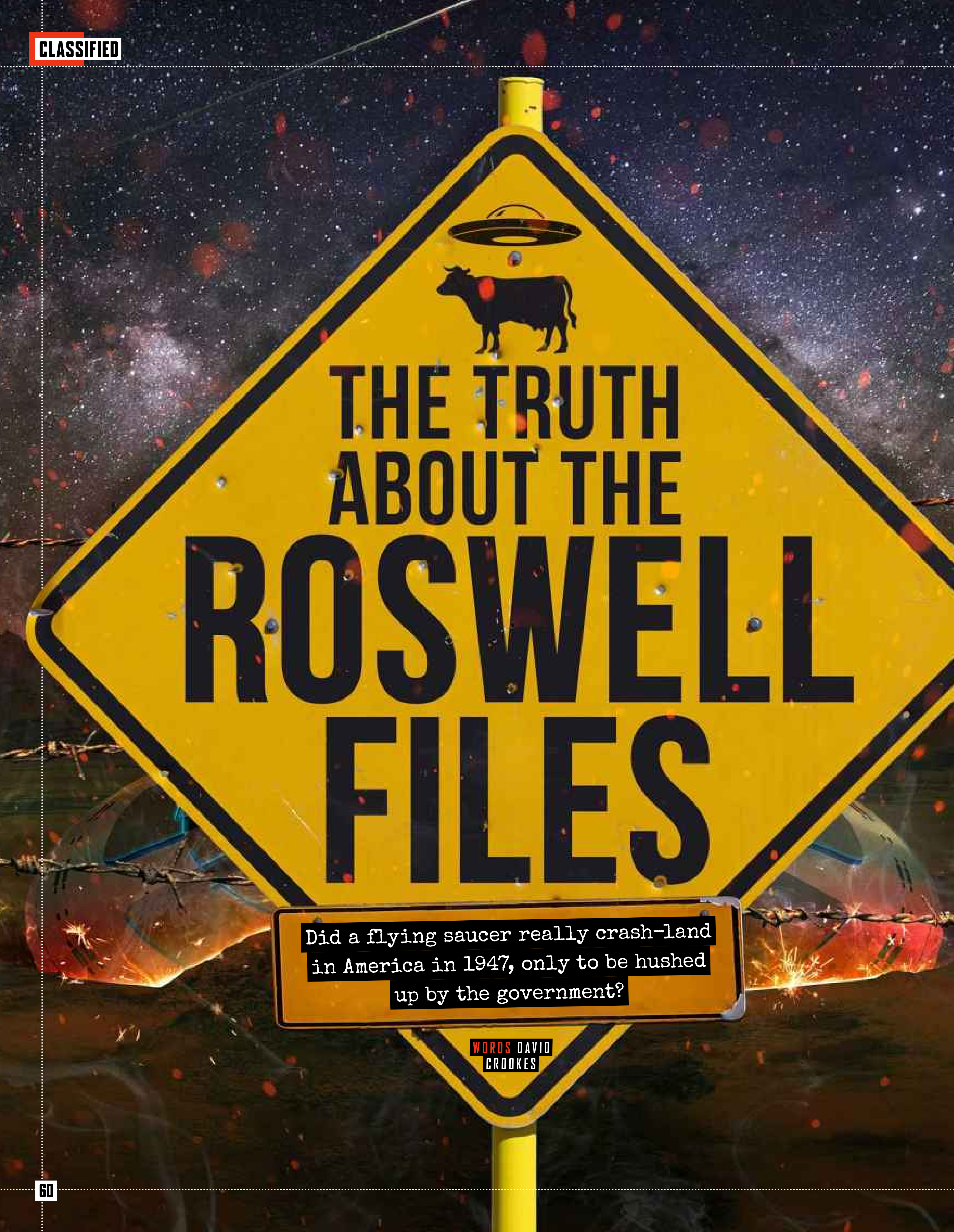
~~**Above:** The AATIP's substantial findings have never been made publicly available~~

EXTRATERRESTRIAL EVIDENCE?

The release of The Pentagon Tapes in April 2020 has been one of the largest and most revelatory events in recent governmental UFO history. The Pentagon Tapes is the name given to three videos that purport to show UFOs in flight. Originally recorded in 2004 and 2015, these clips were familiar to UFO researchers and enthusiasts, having been previously leaked in 2007 and 2015, but had never been addressed by official news outlets or governmental departments. The common thread joining these separate instances was that all footage had been recorded during a series of US Air Force training flights, thereby possessing a level of legitimacy rarely seen in publicly-submitted evidence.

One video, shot in 2004, achieved far more interest than others, depicting a saucer-shaped UFO flying above the Pacific Ocean. Tracking the craft, two fighter pilots excitedly and audibly discuss what they are viewing, with one shouting "Look at that thing!". Another clip shows a UFO moving past an American aircraft at high speed, whose pilot loudly exclaims, "What the f*** is that?!". In this clip, the object appears to hover for a moment, potentially identifying the American aircraft nearby, before flying away at extreme speed, swiftly exiting the camera's range.

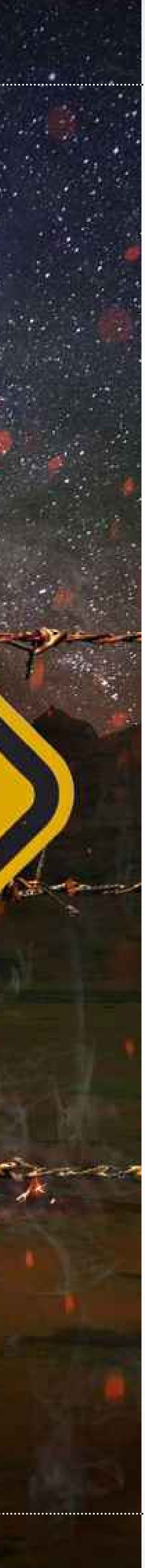
Releasing any reported UFO footage would appear to be a strange decision on the part of the American government, however it was claimed the intention was to dispel, rather than encourage any concern about the existence of UFOs and alien beings. Like so many governmental reports before them, The Pentagon announced that by releasing these tapes, the hope was to "clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real".

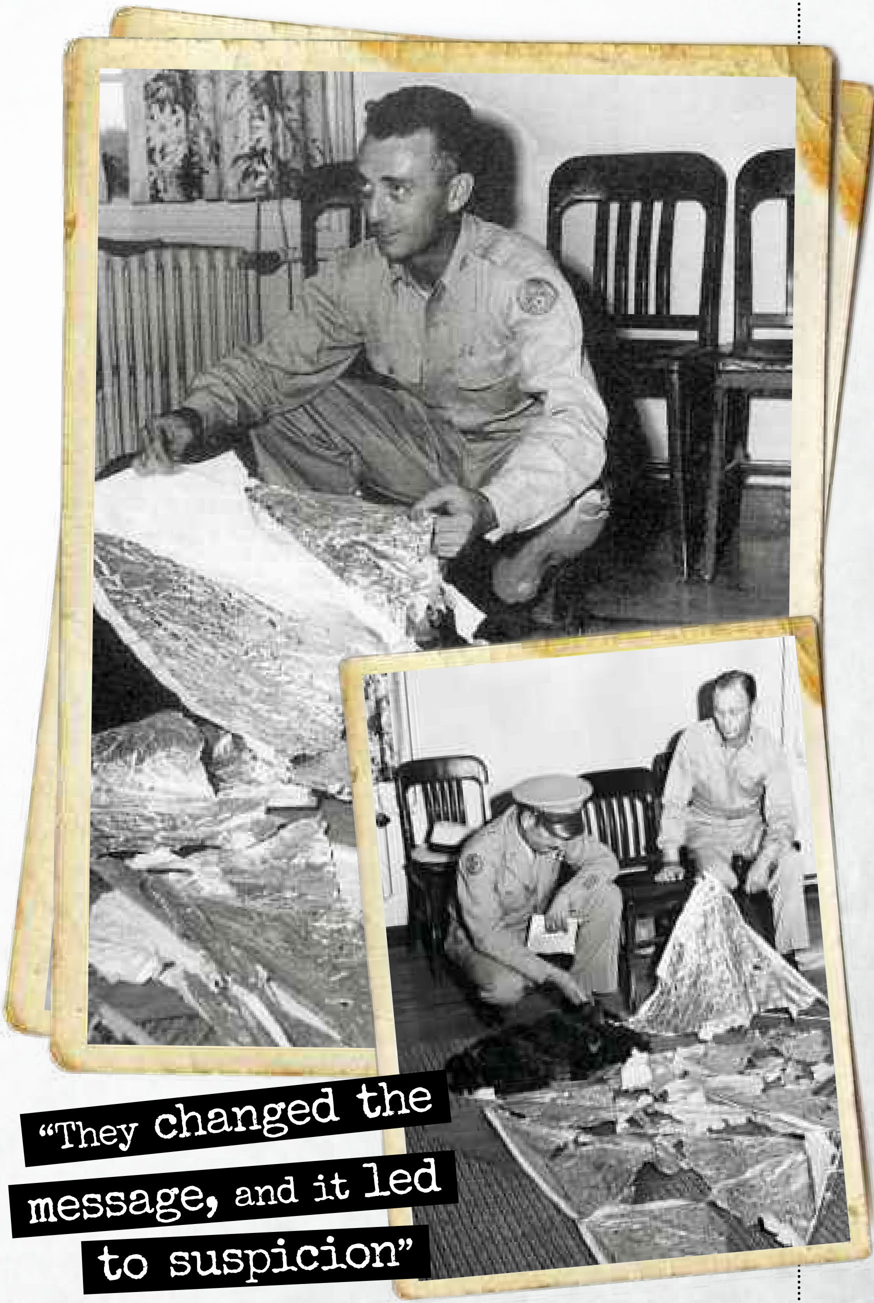


THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ROSWELL FILES

Did a flying saucer really crash-land in America in 1947, only to be hushed up by the government?

WORDS DAVID CROOKES





"They changed the message, and it led to suspicion"

Above: In 1947, Brigadier General Roger M Ramey and Colonel Thomas J DuBose identified fragments found by the rancher as pieces of a weather balloon. The story changed in 1994, however

© Getty; Alamy

There is a spaceship that looks like a flying saucer in Roswell. Thousands of motorists drive past it every day, and hundreds of people pop inside. It's on North Main Street in this southeastern New Mexico city, its metal skin gleaming as it basks in the glow of the Sun. Its neon lighting burns into the retinae of those who view it throughout the evening, and it's rather hard not to admire it. After all, quite aside from its striking looks, who doesn't fancy a burger every now and then? This spacecraft is one of the city's McDonald's restaurants, and the reason why the building is shaped that way? It's not that far from the site of a mysterious incident which took place in 1947 – the day when a rancher discovered debris scattered around his sheep pasture, prompting speculation that a UFO had crashed there.

William Brazel was ready for a normal day's work on the J B Foster ranch in Lincoln County, New Mexico, 120 kilometres (75 miles) north of Roswell. It was July in 1947, and he was shocked to find "a large area of bright wreckage made up of rubber strips, tinfoil, a rather tough paper and sticks," to quote his words at the time.

Brazel hadn't heard of flying saucers. At least not yet. Sightings, however, were coming in thick and fast around that time. On 24 June, pilot Kenneth Arnold claimed to see nine unidentified objects "flying like a saucer would" near Mount Rainier, Washington. Arnold estimated that the objects were flying at around 1,930 kilometres (1,200 miles) per hour, but at the time there were no known craft that could reach those speeds. The Air Force also said it had no new experimental planes or guided missiles that would fit such a description.

Even so, the US soon became gripped, as Brazel discovered. By 7 July, police and astronomers were reportedly being harassed for further reports, this time over in New York and other Eastern states, and that was the day Brazel decided to take action. He hand-delivered a box of accumulated debris, which he'd gathered with the help of his wife and two children, to Sheriff George Wilcox of Roswell.

IN THE SYSTEM

By now there was talk of a reward for anyone who recovered one of these unidentified flying objects. Brazel "whispered kinda confidential-like" that his find may be one of the flying discs, so an equally intrigued Wilcox contacted Colonel William Blanchard, the commanding officer of the Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF), who sent agents to the site to gather the remaining material.

What happened next would cement the idea that the debris was from an alien spacecraft. The RAAF's public information officer, Walter Haut, issued a press release on 8 July: "The many rumours regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff's office of Chaves County".

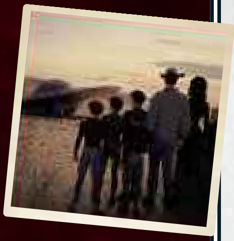
This was reported in the *Roswell Daily Record* along with the news that Major Jesse A Marcel was the group intelligence officer dispatched to the scene. He'd gone with Counter Intelligence Corps officer Sheridan Cavitt, but on his way back took a detour to his home, whipped out a couple of boxes of debris that he'd popped into the boot of his car and showed it to his ten-year-old son, Jesse Jr. One of the objects was said to have hieroglyphic-like markings, something that stuck in the mind of the young boy.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Who knows what actually crashed in 1947? All we know is that something ended up on the ground near Roswell

1 CRASH LANDING

Rancher William Brazel discovered strange-looking debris scattered across his ranch sometime after 14 June. Whatever it was, everyone has since agreed that something crashed overnight.

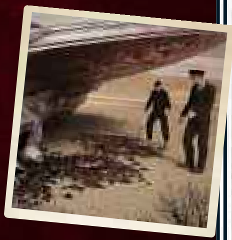


2 EXAMINING THE WRECKAGE

Having pondered his find, Brazel took his family to look at the wreckage to see what they made of it. There were also reported sightings of UFOs across the United States.

3 REPORTING THE FIND

Brazel reported the find to the police sheriff of Roswell, driving over to the police station to show evidence of some debris. The army was then informed of the incident.



4 GATHERING SOME DEBRIS

Major Marcel was sent to the scene along with Lieutenant Colonel Cavitt to gather evidence. When they returned, there was a suggestion that the items were not of this Earth.

Flying Disk

5 PRESS RELEASE ISSUED

A statement was issued suggesting that a 'flying disc' had been found, and this was what was reported by the media. It caught people's imagination, and there was great interest in the incident.

Yet just as quickly as excitement of the find gathered pace, so the US Army took swift action in debunking the story. Indeed, the very next day, shortly after government scientists began to arrive at the scene, it was claimed that the debris was actually from a crashed weather balloon, and Marcel was asked to be pictured at a press conference with the debris allegedly found. And that was that. Case closed… or so everyone thought.

REVISITING THE STORY

But around 1978, interest began to grow again. Nuclear physicist, author and UFO researcher, Stanton Friedman, interviewed Marcel, who said that the discovery made 31 years earlier was not from this world and that the government had ordered him to keep quiet. Friedman revisited the incident and sought other witnesses, with his work inspiring Charles Berlitz and William Moore to write *The Roswell Incident*, published in 1980. Their conclusion was simple: there had been a huge cover-up. There was no going back.

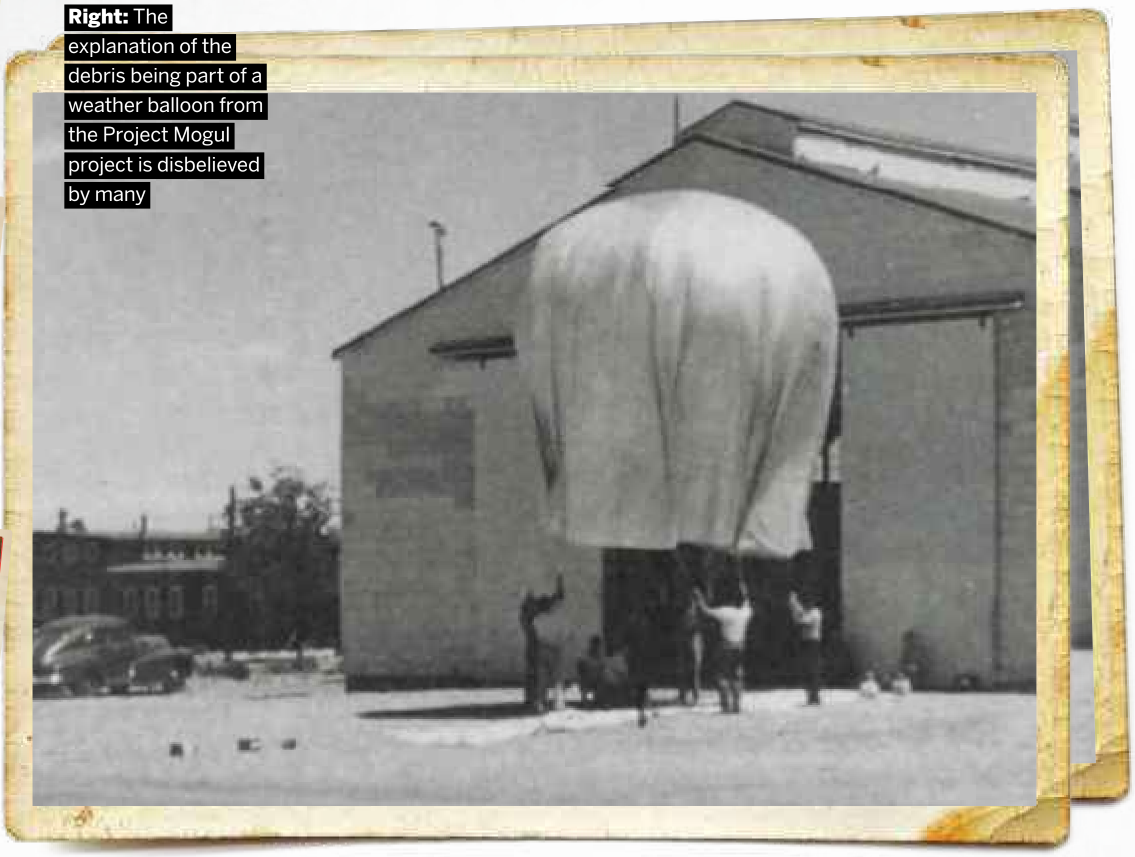
Other things were happening in the world at this time. Notably, the sci-fi films *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* had been released, and there have been studies since that suggest sightings and belief in UFOs rise when popular films and TV shows make their debut. Nevertheless, testimonies about that day in 1947 were forthcoming, and they continued to come for many years.

Glenn Dennis called a hotline shortly after an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* featuring the Roswell incident was aired in the US in 1989. He went further and suggested that a friend who worked as a nurse at the Roswell Army Air Field saw three alien bodies. But the real bombshell moment came in 1994. This is when the US Air Force admitted the weather balloon story was untrue after all. Could it be that the debris really was from an alien craft?

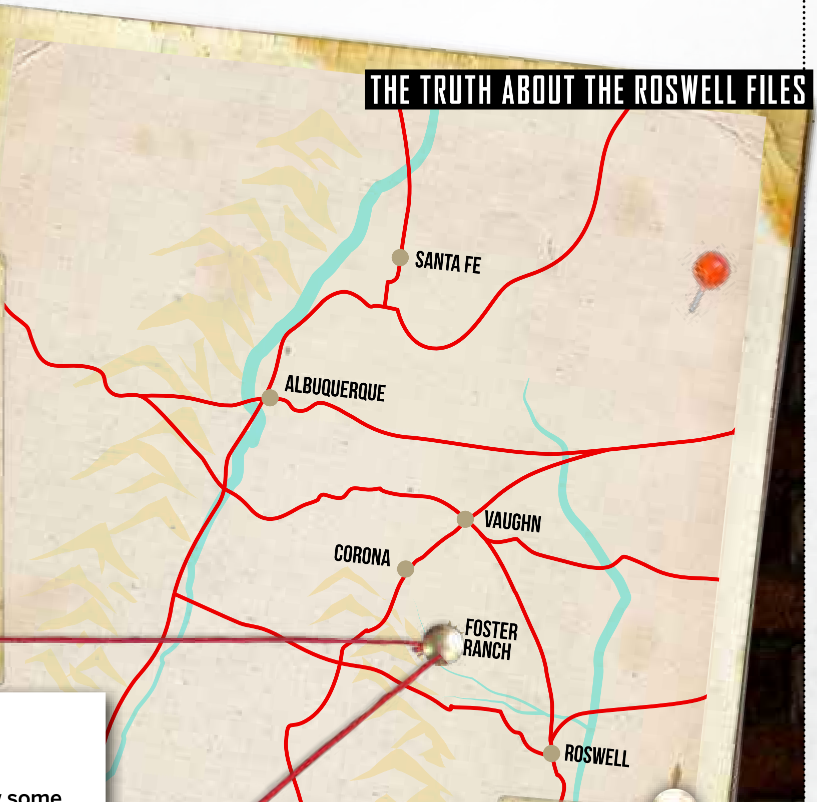
According to the US Air Force, no. It had made up the weather balloon story, but it wasn't to hide the fact that little green men had visited Earth. The wreckage was actually from a classified project that flew microphones on high-altitude balloons so that sound waves generated by Soviet atomic bomb tests could be detected. Called Project Mogul, it was said to have run between 1947-49. What's more, the balloons were claimed to have been made up of unusual material – the type that could easily be confused for a UFO. Case closed? Not at all.

"The ever-changing accounts gave rise to uncertainty," explains Dr Ken Drinkwater, senior lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, who specialises in the anomalous and paranormal. "The first message that went out was unclear. Then they changed the message, and it led to suspicion that something was going on and being covered up. It gives rise to a feeling that something is being hidden from the general population, leading to speculation of possible conspiracy and possibly alien technology."

It's why the Roswell files remain open in the eyes of many, and investigators put great value on the testimonies of those who were there,



Right: The explanation of the debris being part of a weather balloon from the Project Mogul project is disbelieved by many



KEY PEOPLE

Source:Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

WILLIAM BRAZEL

Owner of a ranch near Corona, New Mexico

Brazel discovered the scattered debris and reported it to the authorities, believing it to be evidence of a flying disc.

Source:Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

GEORGE WILCOX

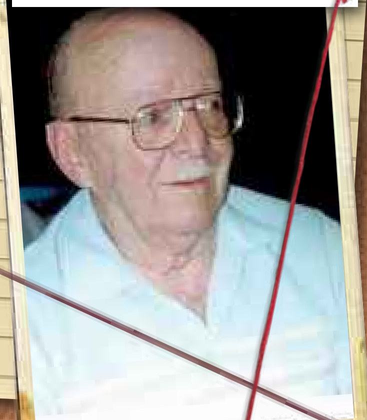
Sheriff of Roswell

Wilcox met with Brazel and saw some of the gathered debris, prompting him to call upon the military.

SHERIDAN CAVITT

Head of counterintelligence

Accompanied Marcel on the site visit on 8 July 1947, saying what was found was consistent with a balloon having crashed.



Source:Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

JESSE MARCEL

Intelligence officer of the 509th Bomb Group

Marcel was sent to view the crash site. He collected debris, becoming convinced that it was from another planet.

Source:Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

WILLIAM BLANCHARD

Commanding officer of the Roswell Army Air Field

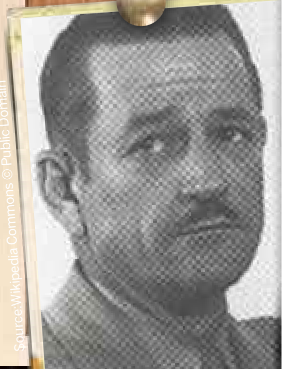
Wilcox contacted Blanchard at the RAAF, who sent agents to examine the site. He ordered the original press release that started a media frenzy.

Source:Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

WALTER HAUT

Public information officer of the 509th Bomb Group

Drafted a press release, which announced the US Army Air Forces had recovered a 'flying disc'. He would later say he saw alien corpses.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ROGER RAMEY

Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force

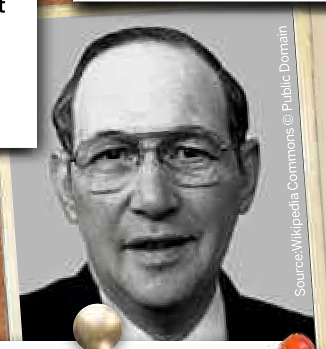
Headed a press conference the day after the press release suggesting a weather balloon crashed near Roswell, and not a UFO.

Source:Wikipedia Commons © SMG2019

STANTON T FRIEDMAN

Professional ufologist

Interviewed Marcel in 1978 and revived the long-forgotten Roswell incident by revealing testimony that claimed the debris was from another planet.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STEVEN SCHIFF

American politician

Representative Schiff requested a report into the Roswell incident, published in 1994. It claimed what crashed was a top-secret Project Mogul balloon.

© Getty:

IS THE TRUTH REALLY OUT THERE?

Former CIA operative Ben Smith investigated the crash that took place in Roswell in 1947 for a television documentary aired on the History Channel, or Sky History in the UK, called *Roswell: The First Witness*. He spoke to the grandchildren of Major Jesse Marcel, the person sent to the crash site to gather debris for analysis. He also visited the site with aviation crash experts, studied a journal found among Marcel's possessions for clues and spoke to other witnesses. Was Marcel right? Was the evidence gathered that day really not of this Earth?

Before you began investigating, were you sceptical about what happened in 1947?
I think my initial attitude was one of not scepticism, but healthy doubt. Being a member of government, having formerly worked for the CIA, I'd seen how information is compartmented. The priorities, from a national security standpoint, didn't really seem to align with aliens and the possibility of a huge, vast conspiracy. I've been involved with some pretty expensive operations and I had never heard about the need to cover something like this up. But maybe I was so low or unimportant that I didn't know everything that was going on at the CIA.

In the series, you heard Marcel's version of events, not only through his family, but via tape and video recordings from past interviews. Do you believe what he was saying was true?
Listening to the recordings, talking to body language experts, getting to know Marcel's family and also seeing the fruits of his personality and his character manifested in his children and his grandchildren, I did believe his account insomuch that he believed it, and I don't think he was lying. But I still found discrepancies.

We had Jesse saying that what he found was like balsa wood, but his son calling it an I-beam, so there are already witnesses with different accounts. And then you stack on properties of what was found, like 'memory metal' and 'unbreakable', and I could not find any direct evidence that these claims were from Jesse Marcel's mouth. That was always a tricky part. What came first: the idea of memory metal or the witness accounts?

How trustworthy are personal accounts?
Personal accounts are always tricky, especially when you have individuals claiming they have access to super-important information about enemy plans or a terrorist attack or what have you. You always have to take that with a grain of salt. You always have to investigate the person's motivations, their mental stability, because the last thing you want to do is sell fiction, or something not true, that could result in something terrible, like a war, based on false information. There's a tricky aspect to this, and that's part of the challenge of dealing with something 70 years old. I really tried to do my best to cut through and focus on hard evidence and then weigh people's accounts with what we could find.

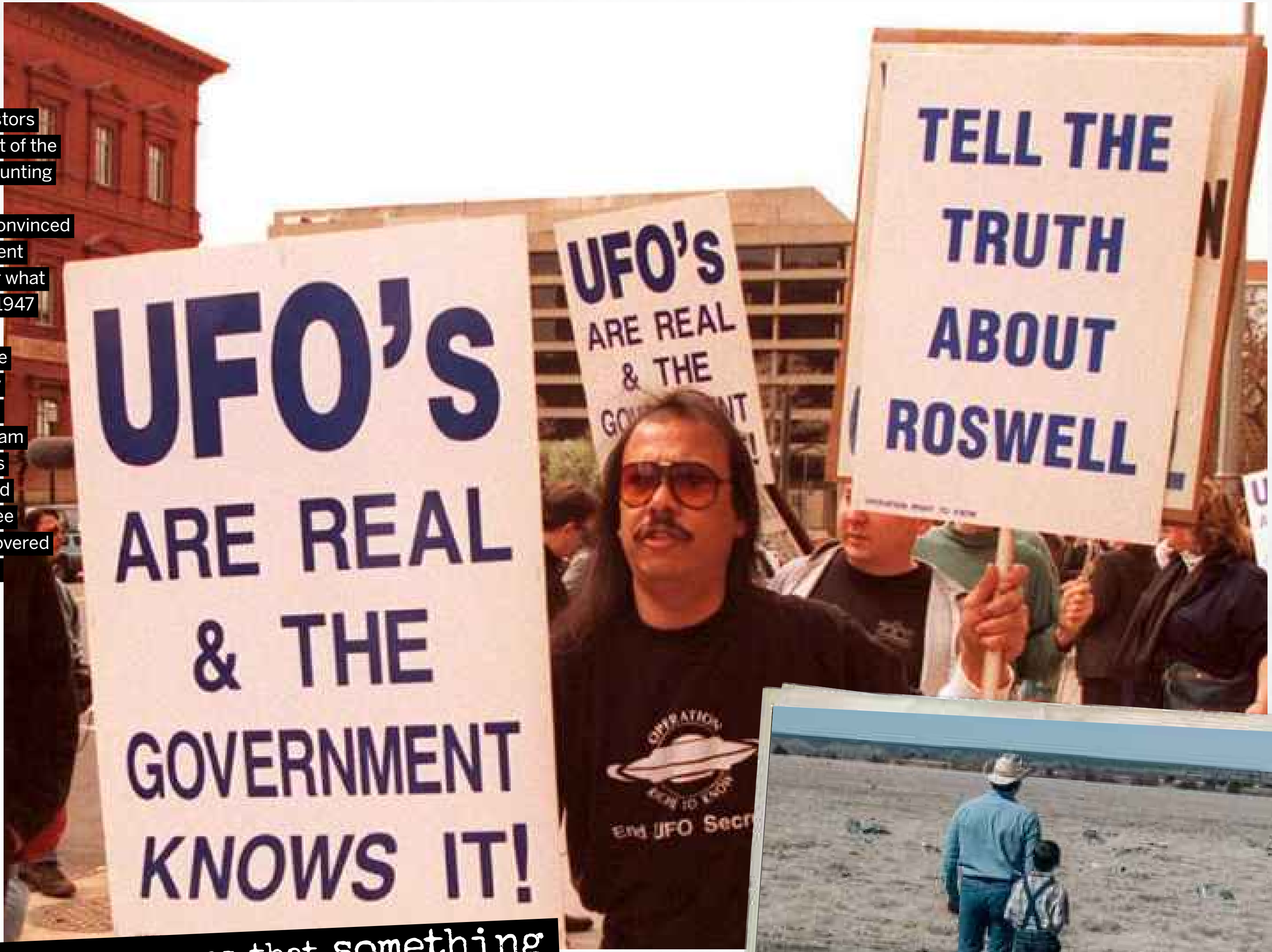
There was a lot of focus in the documentary on a journal. Why was it seen as a vital piece of evidence?
There are two factors: one, the words were written in an Army handbook around the same time of Roswell, and two, it was among the very few documents Marcel passed to his children. He handed over his military records, his medals and this journal to his son, and then later his grandchildren. I think as a primary document or a first-hand account, it's the first potential evidence we have of what really happened at Roswell outside of some of the oral histories, and the question is why was this diary so important to him. Reading it, it seems to be a series of random musings, so we wanted to see if there was a code in there. As we saw in the series, codebreaking didn't work out. But there's still a possibility that the person who wrote it – and we found it wasn't Marcel himself – would remember, if they're still alive.

The government says the object that crashed was a high-altitude balloon used as part of Project Mogul. Did your investigation reach the same conclusion?
We took a safety aviation crash expert to the site, and he at first ruled out the idea of a Mogul balloon. We had another witness scheduled who has pretty convincing research that suggested it definitely wasn't a balloon. I'm not convinced by the excuse.

Were there any people that you wanted to speak to as part of the investigation?
We had more witnesses lined up, but we kind of got hit with the pandemic and travel and health and safety issues, so we didn't get to do all that we wanted to. I would love to have interviewed some of the original researchers like Stan Friedman, who was one of the first to propose the theory that this was a government cover-up. I would have liked to ask the hard questions about who was the first person to say 'memory metal'. Who used that? Where did it come from? I was able to get time with folks like researcher Don Schmidt, who interviewed a lot of the original witnesses, but even he couldn't give those kinds of answers.

So you'd like to continue investigating?
Oh, absolutely. I don't think I'm done, and it's definitely made me more curious. I think there were a number of leads that we generated that I want to follow up on, and it's still an open question in my mind. Until I feel like I have enough to form at least not a foolproof opinion, but something I could tell viewers that I think happened, then I won't be satisfied. My investigation so far hasn't convinced me either way, and I need hard evidence, but I think we got closer than others in looking for a conclusion.

Left: Jennifer Naso forensically examines an intriguing journal found in Marcel's possessions to see if it dated to 1947 and could potentially hold clues


UFO'S ARE REAL & THE GOVERNMENT KNOWS IT!
UFO'S ARE REAL & THE GO
TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT ROSWELL
OPERATION RIGHT TO KNOW
End UFO Secr

Right: Protestors march in front of the General Accounting Office in the mid-1990s, convinced of a government cover-up over what happened in 1947

Far right: The documentary recreated the moment William Brazel and his seven-year-old neighbour, Dee Proctor, discovered the wreckage

> "Everyone agrees that something fell at Roswell, but there is no terrestrial explanation"

many of them respected military. "Every member of Blanchard's senior staff, with a single exception, suggested the craft was of alien origin," says ufologist Kevin D Randle, a retired lieutenant colonel of the US Army Reserve who served in Vietnam and Iraq. "Major Edwin Easley, the base provost marshal, told me, when asked if we were following the right path – meaning extraterrestrial – that it wasn't the wrong path."

The 'single exception' is Cavitt, the retired lieutenant colonel of the US Air Force who accompanied Marcel to the debris site. His careful testimony suggested nothing untoward happened. He said he had never been threatened by anyone in government and that the debris wasn't extensively scattered. Yet UFO investigators say that if the wreckage was Project Mogul, then this testimony doesn't ring true. Mogul arrays were so big, the debris field would have been large.

"Everyone agrees that something fell at Roswell, but there is no terrestrial explanation," Randle told *All About Space* magazine. "Project Mogul fails because the documentation tells us that flight number four – the alleged culprit – was cancelled. It did not fly. All other explanations have failed too: it wasn't an aircraft accident, not a rocket from White Sands and not a regular weather balloon."

NEVERENDING STORY

Over the past 40 or so years there have been new claims and fresh leads, not only adding to the mystery, but keeping the Roswell files very much alive. UFO investigator Calvin Parker, for example, recently spoke of his time with Marcel, who, before he died in 1986, revealed he'd hidden three pieces of metal from the crash site in the top of his water heater in his house. They have never been recovered, however.

Investigators are also keen to stress that they don't take every testimony at face value. Randle has said in the past that the credibility of Dennis must be discounted because of inconsistencies, and he tells us that the accounts of military personnel are not simply accepted just because of their background. "There are some military witnesses who have been discredited as inserting themselves into the tale," Randle explains. Likewise, there are civilian witnesses who are compelling.

"There are some very creditable civilian witnesses, such as Brazel and Frankie Rowe," Randle continues. Rowe is certainly an interesting case. She was told of the crash by her father, a firefighter, who described creatures he had seen. Rowe said she was shown debris from the crash site, but had been told to stay quiet by the state. She also says there was evidence her phone had been tapped. But of all of the witnesses, is too much weight being put on Marcel's account?

"If Marcel was standalone then there would be some real problems here, but he is not," says Randle. "There are many credible witnesses – men who achieved high military rank, men and women who were prominent in their communities – who believe the craft was alien."

© Getty; History Channel

WHAT WAS THE OBJECT?

A FLYING SAUCER

+ Some would label the proponents of this argument as UFO conspiracists, but research based on the accounts of military personnel and apparent witnesses to the Roswell event ensures this theory won't go away and is now seared into the public consciousness.

WEATHER BALLOON

+ The remains of a weather balloon was the explanation given the day after the US Army sought to quickly play down a press release claiming a UFO had been found. Authorities have since admitted this claim was false.

PROJECT MOGUL

+ In 1994, the National Security Agency published a report that connected Roswell to Project Mogul, a secret US Army project that launched high-altitude balloons into the ionosphere above the desert, built to monitor Russian nuclear tests.

"We have attempted to eliminate the fakers from those who had information to provide. We have been taken in, for a time, by some of those fakers, but in the long run it was we who investigated the case that removed many of those fakers, though based on evidence and not a belief there is no alien visitation. The point is that Marcel was backed up by other high-ranking officers, and many civilians who were part of the case. Marcel told what he had seen and done, and there was little embellishment in his testimony."

Randle appeared in a 2020 documentary series called *Roswell: The First Witness*. It followed the investigations of former CIA operative Ben Smith into Roswell, and a key component of the series was a journal found in Marcel's possessions that was initially thought to have been written by him.

It turned out that the journal – which consisted of quotes, lyrics and jokes – could be dated to the time of the Roswell incident, but the handwriting didn't match Marcel's. Smith pondered why the former army officer retained the journal, and there was speculation over whether it may have contained a code. If it did, however, it could not be deciphered by even the best of minds.

Smith also sought to discover what was written in a document held by Brigadier General Roger Ramey, Eighth Air Force commander, during the press conference. It was captured in a photograph taken by *Star-Telegram* reporter J Bond Johnson, and ufologists have long wondered whether the words they struggle to make out refer to 'victims of the wreck'. As Smith found, however, even the best technology could not sufficiently clean the document to make the words readable, and they remain a source of debate.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

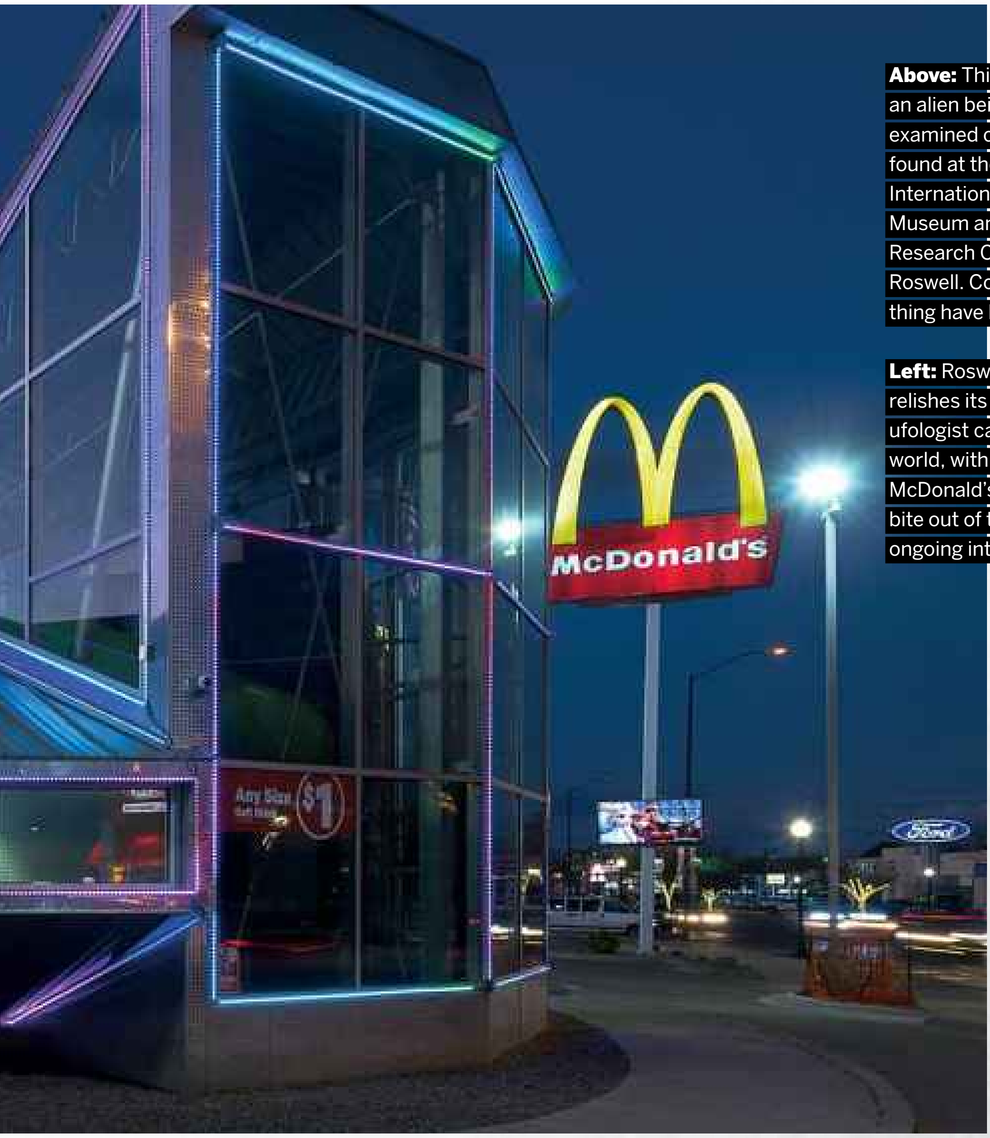
There were other interesting explorations in the documentary series. A body language expert examined video interviews of Marcel and said it appeared he was telling the truth, at least as he saw it. Experts including aviation crash investigator, David Soucie, were also taken to examine the crash site. Interestingly, the wind currents in the area were found to be

"I found all this stuff and I was told to keep my mouth shut" inconsistent with a lightweight balloon crashing in the way that was described.

As the documentary continued, more evidence emerged. Crucially, there was a taped interview between Marcel and author Linda G Corley, in which the military man discussed the items he found in 1947. "I found all this stuff and I was told to keep my mouth shut," he told her. "I held on to this premium for 32 years without saying anything at all. See, I was an intelligence officer. I handled intelligence and security for the base. I still hold an allegiance to my country, the vow that I took to keep my mouth shut about everything that might encroach on military secrets."

Just as compelling was an account from the family of Patrick Saunders, the 509th adjutant who is likely to have known about the whole event. He had apparently told people that it wasn't a weather balloon, but something similar to a jet fighter, that files were destroyed or changed and that the world wasn't ready for the truth because it would cause social upheaval. Were the 'beings' friendly, he was said to have pondered.

Above: This display of an alien being examined can be found at the International UFO Museum and Research Center at Roswell. Could such a thing have happened?



Left: Roswell relishes its role as the ufologist capital of the world, with even McDonald's taking a bite out of the ongoing interest

This kind of testimony – particularly the first-hand testimony of Marcel that was chronicled in Corley's book, *For the Sake of My Country* – ensures the incident remains open. The fact the US government admitted there was a cover-up in 1994 only continues to add fuel to the fire.

Yet Drinkwater says failure to provide physical evidence means anecdotal accounts have spread misinformation, and he remains in doubt. "Colonel John B Alexander offers an excellent insight into the myths and possible conspiracies connected to UFOs, the Roswell incident, the government involvement and so on," he says. "I think it's more about a sense of reality and how it can be swayed emotionally. I'm dubious about the nature of a secret operation where many might not have known about the goings on at their level."

So what of those who likely know: presidents past and present, perhaps? Former president Donald Trump told his son, Don Jr, in an interview on YouTube in June 2020 that he'd heard some "interesting things" about aliens, thereby ensuring speculation will continue for some while yet.

"Would you ever open up Roswell and let us know what's really going on," Don Jr asked, to which Trump responded: "There are millions and millions of people who want to go there and want to see it. I won't talk to you about what I know about it, but it's very interesting."

That's something countless people will no doubt chew over if they happen to visit and find themselves in that extraordinary McDonald's. Roswell is a town that will be forever linked to one of the greatest mysteries of all time, and we may never truly reach a consensus on the truth that is out there.

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WHAT ARE THEY HIDING?

If the truth is out there then governments are doing their level best to hide it – at least according to these conspiracy theories

WORDS DAVID CROOKES

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MILITARY INSTALLATION

Given the lack of hard evidence (and the myriad denials) for the existence of UFOs, it's natural to come to one, stark conclusion: someone, somewhere is trying to suppress the truth. That someone tends to be a government. Somewhere is often the United States. But with sufficient plausibility and solid answers to the most probing of questions, a conspiracy theory can – and usually does – flourish, sparking much debate and encouraging deep research.

As we're about to see, such conspiracy theories tend to revolve around two things. First, that UFOs are very much real and have even crash-landed on Earth. Second, that governments are not only aware of this but have gone to great lengths to cover-up proof of alien life – extraterrestrial beings that have actually ended up working here. With social media and a growing feeling that the authorities don't always act well on our behalf, you can be sure these theories are not going away.

AREA 51

So secret, it appears as a blob on satellite images

+ Area 51 is located at Groom Lake, some 135 kilometres (85 miles) north of Las Vegas in the barren Nevada desert. It's known to be a United States Air Force base that was established in 1955. But the facility, close to the small towns of Rachel and Hiko, was not actually acknowledged by the military until 2013 and the base's specific activities still remain highly secret.

Although it's known that Area 51 has been used to test aircraft, such as the Lockheed U-2 spy plane that was in operation during the Cold War, as well as nuclear weapons, a wider lack of shared information coupled with some of the tightest security restrictions on Earth has led to some wild theories. The most notable ones suggest the area, which is part of the vast Nevada Test and Training Range complex, has been used to hide aliens and their spacecraft. Indeed, Area 51 is said to be where the wreckage of a "flying disc" that supposedly crashed in Roswell, New Mexico in 1947, was taken for analysis along with the bodies of its crew.

In 1989, this particular conspiracy was pushed up a notch when a conspiracy theorist called Bob Lazar claimed to have reverse-engineered extraterrestrial technology at a facility very close to Area 51. Then, in 1995, footage of an alleged alien autopsy was revealed. Said to have been filmed at Area 51 involving an alien discovered in the Roswell incident, the grainy black-and-white video appeared to show three government pathologists dissecting a corpse. It formed part of a documentary called *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction?* but it later transpired it was far more of the latter. Quickly debunked, it turned out the whole thing had been filmed in a London living room.

Since then, the largely accepted version of events suggests the discovered UFO was actually a weather balloon but there have been countless other accounts of strange objects in the sky around Area 51. There have also been many claims of alien abductions and suggestions that Area 51 has hosted alien meetings in which joint initiatives with humans have been discussed – including time travel and exotic propulsion systems. Such talk led to a joke plan for millions of people to storm Area 51 in 2019 in search of the truth: 150 got close before being turned away.

Any unauthorized photographic or recording equipment will be seized and confiscated, and the owner detained.
BE ADVISED THAT ALL PERSONS ENTERING THIS ROOM DO SO ENTIRELY AT THEIR OWN RISK

Below: Many believe that aliens crashed in Roswell in 1947 and were taken to Area 51

NELLIS BOMBING AND GUNNERY RANGE
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NO TRESPASSING BEYOND THIS POINT
PHOTOGRAPHY IS PROHIBITED
WARNING

Above: Going beyond the border of Area 51 is strictly forbidden – you're not even allowed to take photos

© Getty; Alamy

MEN IN BLACK

Got something to say? These guys may pay you a visit

+ On 21 June 1947, Harold Dahl was steering a patrol boat close to the eastern shore of Maury Island in the US state of Washington. He looked to the sky and saw six large doughnut-shaped objects hovering overhead, before recoiling in horror as metallic debris cascaded down, killing his 15-year-old son's dog and causing injury to one of the two crewmen.

After taking photographs of the alleged incident and reporting it to his supervisor, Dahl claimed he received a visit by a man wearing a dark suit. The man is said to have invited Dahl for lunch, where he recounted the very same incident in great detail. He then told Dahl to keep quiet or else suffer some rather dire consequences.

Although the entire thing was later discovered to be a hoax, the Maury Island incident was nevertheless the first report of the so-called men in black – shadowy government agents hell-bent on suppressing the 'truth' about UFO and alien sightings. From that point on, other people also claimed to have been visited and threatened in such a way. Among them was Albert K Bender, founder of the International Flying Saucer Bureau in 1952, which ended up closing abruptly the following year. Bender said he'd been approached by three men in black who told him everything about UFOs. These men, he claimed, were actually aliens who communicate telepathically, attempting to cover their tracks.

Gray Barker's book, *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers* in 1956, helped to popularise the myth as did Bender's subsequent tome, *Flying Saucers and the Three Men* in 1962. The 1997 movie, *Men In Black*, also shed light on these mysterious figures, despite it being a tongue-in-cheek sci-fi comedy. Indeed, the tactics used by Agent K and Agent J in the film – which include interrogation and memory wiping – have been reported by alleged witnesses of strange things. Of course, the US government denies the existence of such agents – human or alien – even though this, perversely, only ever serves to add further weight to the hush-hush nature of the conspiracy.

Above: The 1997 film *Men In Black* was based on the long-running claims that shadowy men would visit anyone reporting a potentially viable UFO sighting

> "Of course, the US government denies the existence of such agents – human or alien"

MAJESTIC 12 (MJ-12)

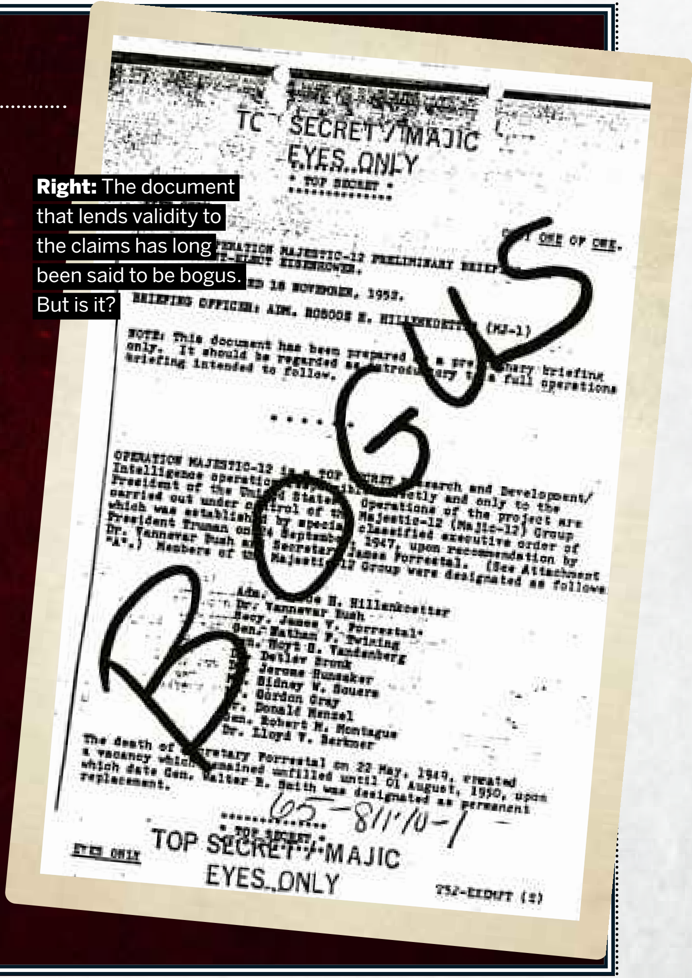
There are a dozen reasons to believe this theory is true

+ Tying neatly into both the Area 51 and men in black conspiracies is a claim that US president, Harry S Truman, ordered the creation of an organisation tasked with investigating and recovering alien spacecraft. Apparently formed in the wake of the incident in Roswell, the secret group of 12 scientists, engineers, attorneys, government officials, military officers and intelligence leaders were said to have overseen the remains of four alien corpses recovered that year. Such information was apparently noted in a briefing paper handed to Dwight Eisenhower five years later.

That alleged classified document landed in the hands of TV producer Jaime Shandera in 1984, posted from an unknown source. Shandera then dug deeper and came across another memo from 1954. Known as the Cutler-Twining Memo, it had been written by the US government official Robert Cutler to the US Air Force general Nathan Twining, discussing an MJ-12 special studies project being held in July. In 1987, British author and leading UFO researcher, Timothy Good, also got hold of a 1952 memo. He published it in his 1987 book *Above Top Secret: The Worldwide U.F.O. Cover-Up*, prompting Shandera to also release the 1954 memo.

The documents, which explained what the US should do with the discovered alien technology and how the US should communicate with aliens, seemed to be proof of a government cover-up and journalists seized upon the discovery. They reported that the then CIA director, Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, wrote, "although these creatures are human-like in appearance, the biological and evolutionary processes responsible for their development has apparently been quite different from those observed or postulated in homo-sapiens". But there was doubt over the document's authenticity.

Today, it's claimed that the documents were part of a sophisticated hoax and the FBI has determined them to be fake. The US Air Force Office of Special Investigations denies MJ-12 was ever set up and, while conspiracy theories over the validity of the documents continue to be debated, there's a chance they were created to deflect attention away from secret Air Force projects. Disinformation campaigns were common at the time.



TOP SECRET / MAJIC
EYES ONLY
• TOP SECRET •

[illegible] ONE OF ONE.

[illegible]ATION MAJESTIC-12 PRELIMINARY BRIEF[illegible]
[illegible]-ELECT EISENHOWER.
[illegible]ED 18 NOVEMBER, 1952.
BRIEFING OFFICER: ADM. ROSCOE H. HILLENKOETTER (MJ-1)

NOTE: This document has been prepared [illegible] a pre[illegible]nary briefing only. It should be regarded as [illegible]troductory t[illegible] a full operations briefing intended to follow.

• • • • •

OPERATION MAJESTIC-12 is a TOP [illegible] Research and Development/ Intelligence operatio[illegible] [illegible]tly and only to the President of the U[illegible] State[illegible] Operations of the project are carried out under c[illegible]trol of th[illegible] Majestic-12 (Majic-12) Group which was establish[illegible] by specia[illegible] classified executive order of President Truman on [illegible]4 Septemb[illegible], 1947, upon recommendation by Dr. Vannevar Bush and Secretary James Forrestal. (See Attachment "A".) Members of th[illegible] Majestic-12 Group were designated as follows:

Adm. [illegible] H. Hillenkoetter
Dr. Vannevar Bush
Secy. James V. Forrestal*
Gen. Nathan F. Twining
[illegible]n. Hoyt S. Vandenberg
D[illegible] Detlev Bronk
[illegible] Jerome Hunsaker
[illegible]. Sidney W. Souers
[illegible]. Gordon Gray
[illegible]. Donald Menzel
[illegible]en. Robert M. Montague
Dr. Lloyd V. Berkner

The death of [illegible]retary Forrestal on 22 May, 1949, created a vacancy which [illegible]emained unfilled until 01 August, 1950, upon which date Gen. Walter B. Smith was designated as permanent replacement.

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BOGUS

Right: The document that lends validity to the claims has long been said to be bogus. But is it?

BOB LAZAR

Meet the UFO whistleblower who has gone down a storm

+ When Bob Lazar emerged in 1989, claiming to have reverse-engineered extraterrestrial technology as an employee at a subsidiary of Area 51 called S-4, it not only caused something of a stir, it also led him to become something of a cult figure in the UFO community. By claiming to have seen nine flying saucers and suggesting the US government was ordering them to be pulled apart in a bid to make technological breakthroughs, Lazar gained huge support among believers despite a lack of hard evidence.

Some of his claims have since been roundly discredited. He said, for example, that he worked directly with element 115 and that it was used as a fuel in alien spacecraft – powering a gravity propulsion system via an antimatter reactor. This element, he suggested, couldn't be synthesised on Earth because it was too heavy, meaning it had to have come from elsewhere. But element 115 – the highly radioactive element Moscovium – has been successfully synthesised. This took place in 2003 in Russia, where it was found to have a half-life of just 0.65 seconds, which is too fast for it to be used as fuel.

Right: The facility referenced by Bob Lazar is south of the Area 51 facility at Groom Lake

Other claims appear to be more outlandish, including one concerning alleged briefing documents suggesting that aliens from the Zeta Reticuli star system have been in contact with Earth for 10,000 years. He also says he may have seen alien cadavers – or at least dolls being used to represent them. And when questioned why there is scant evidence regarding his employment and education background (he says he studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and worked at Los Alamos National Laboratory), he claims the details have been erased.

Yet he stands by his claims and an interview with Lazar on the Joe Rogan podcast in 2019 inspired a college student, Matty Roberts, to jokily set up a fake Facebook event called Storm Area 51 that ultimately came to nothing. That said, Lazar isn't active in UFO circles any more and instead runs United Nuclear, which sells chemicals, lab materials and lasers.

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SERPO

Have humans really only been to the Moon?

+ In an apparent twist on the Roswell incident, some ufologists believe that an alien survived the 1947 crash, quickly learned to speak English and eventually managed to phone home. A short while later, the alien – named Extraterrestrial Biological Entity, or EBE1 – ended up going back to a planet called Serpo in the Zeta Reticuli star system, sparking a decades-long diplomatic relationship between humans and the far-flung friendly Ebens that may well continue to this day.

Although that sounds, in some respects, like part of the plot for the 1982 film, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, the claims have nevertheless gathered pace over the years. There are, it has to be said, elements of another Stephen Spielberg movie, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in some of the stories but there is no denying that Serpo figures highly in a lot of UFO research.

The most intriguing claim suggests that, in 1962, President Kennedy struck a deal with the Ebens, which resulted in a huge spacecraft landing at the Nevada test site three years later. An exchange programme was then established, which led to 12 military personnel (10 men and two women) travelling 37 light years on board the alien spacecraft to the distant planet. Once there, they apparently discovered that the planet had two suns, one city, many villages and a population of roughly 650,000.

Most of these details are claimed to have been documented in an official 3,000-page debriefing by seven (or eight, depending on the version) of those who travelled. They returned to Earth after 13 years (the trip itself taking 10 months) but it's said most of them later died from the immense doses of radiation they'd been exposed to. The others either died on Serpo or decided to stay.

Even so, the human race is said to have benefitted from the arrangement. The aliens showed us their antigravity spacecraft and assisted in the development of energy-based technology. The Ebens have also, it's said, shared a complete history of the universe in the form of The Yellow Book. Trouble is, despite promises of photographs and other physical evidence of the trip, nothing has ever emerged.

Above: No planet has yet been confirmed to host life but is that because officials won't admit to Serpo?

DULCE BASE

Digging deep for evidence of alien existence

+ Archuleta Mesa is a topographically isolated summit on the Colorado-New Mexico border. It boasts an elevation of 2,812 metres (9,226 feet) but it's what potentially lies beneath – at Dulce, New Mexico – that has piqued the imagination of most.

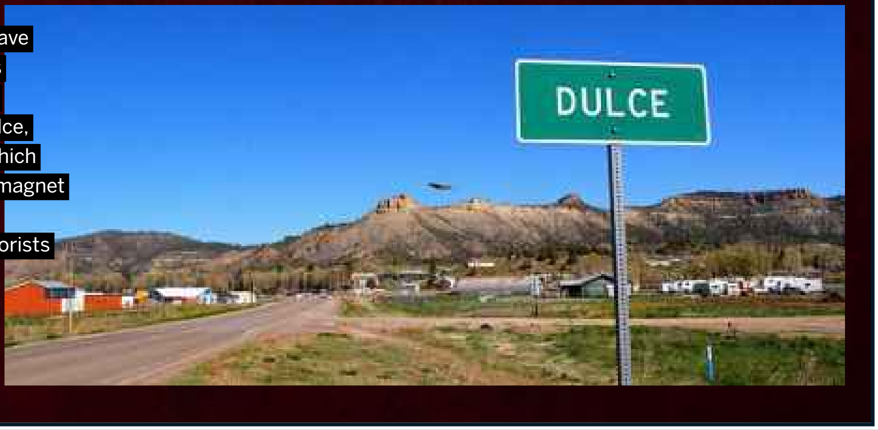
According to businessman and UFO investigator, Paul Bennewitz, who died in 2003, there's a hidden, secret underground alien facility which, it has been claimed, is spread across seven floors. Bennewitz 'revealed' his discovery in 1982, three years after he said he'd intercepted electronic signals deep underground, telling the world that the base is where humans and Grey aliens apparently work together. What's more, he said the US government has full knowledge of it.

Bennewitz's claims followed reports of UFO sightings and mutilated cattle in the area, the latter being blamed on visiting beings (one cow is said to have had a dead foetus inside of unknown origin). Bennewitz's suggestion of an underground base was also backed by Phil Schneider, who claimed to have been involved in building the facility for the military. He said that, during the time he worked on the project, he and other construction workers came into contact with aliens.

Although the story spread among the UFO community, it wasn't until late 1980 that it began to be taken more seriously. John Lear, son of the Learjet magnate Bill Lear, and an aviator who flew cargo planes for the CIA between 1967 and 1983, suggested the US government was in close contact with extraterrestrials. He went on to claim that Germany recovered a flying saucer in 1939 and the US government allowed alien abductions.

Significantly, Lear also said he had strong, independent confirmation of the existence of Dulce Base from four different sources, with Schneider going on to suggest an apparent battle within the base between the US military and different alien species, which caused the deaths of around 60 people (and saw Schneider lose fingers). This ultimately led to a peace deal between the races and humans – which is perhaps why those who flock to the annual Dulce Base UFO Conference to discuss the claims are undeterred from attending.

Right: There have been countless reports of UFO sightings in Dulce, New Mexico, which has become a magnet for the UFO conspiracy theorists



J ROD THE ALIEN

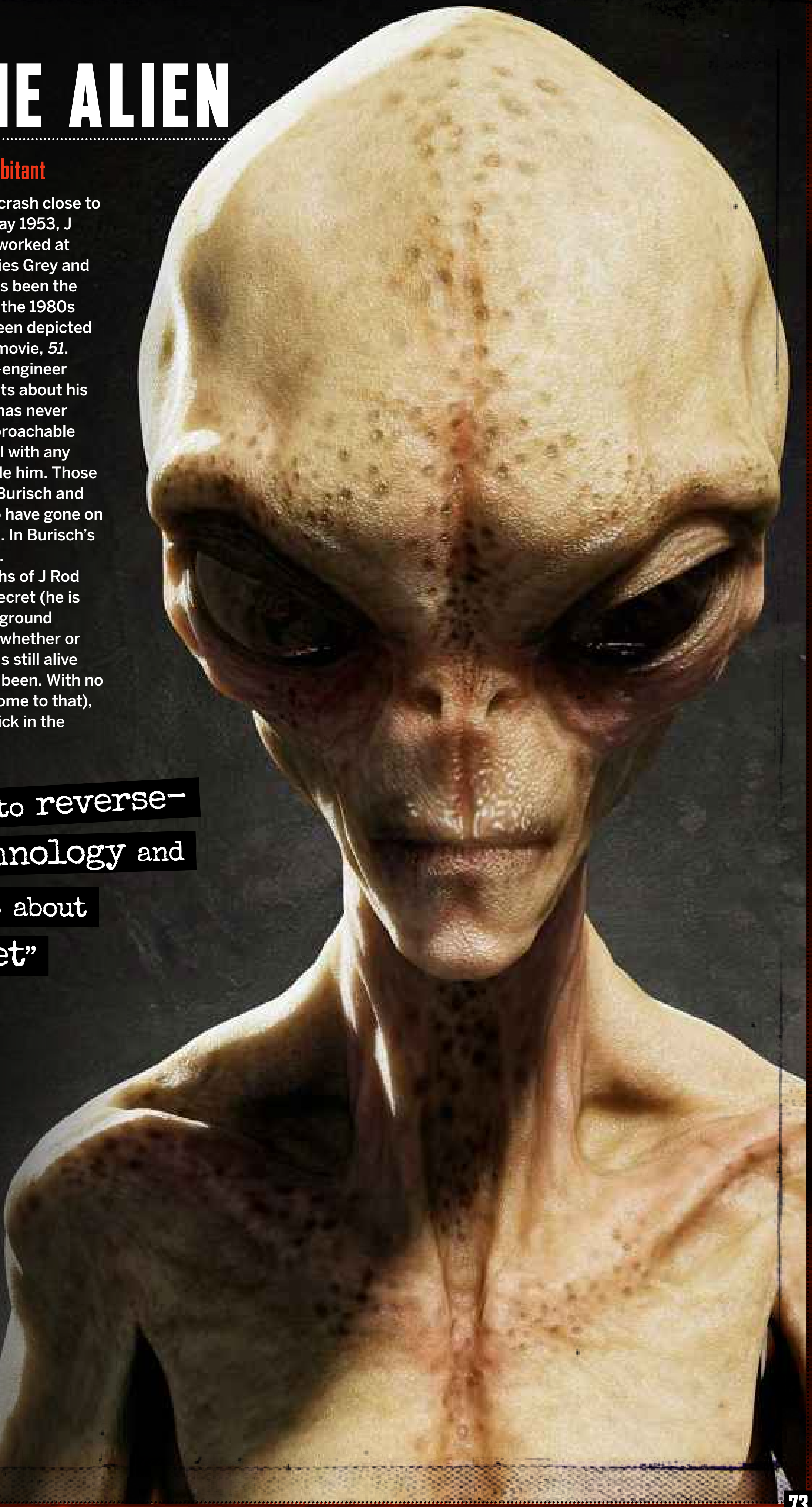
It's Area 51's most infamous inhabitant

+ Claimed to have survived a UFO crash close to Kingman Airport, Arizona, on 21 May 1953, J Rod is said to be an alien who has worked at Area 51. Apparently from the species Grey and capable of telekinesis, the male has been the subject of many discussions since the 1980s and his fame is such that he has been depicted in novels, documentaries and the movie, *51*.

J Rod's role has been to reverse-engineer alien technology and divulge secrets about his home planet – the name of which has never been revealed. He is said to be approachable and knowledgeable, getting on well with any humans who have worked alongside him. Those have included microbiologist Dan Burisch and former Navy pilot Bill Uhouse, who have gone on record to say they've met the alien. In Burisch's case, they've even become friends.

Even so, there are no photographs of J Rod and his current location remains secret (he is said to have once lived in an underground bunker). There is also debate over whether or not this slim, tall, large-eyed alien is still alive and, if not, what his fate may have been. With no official confirmations (or denials come to that), this celestial celebrity is sure to stick in the mind for many years to come.

> "J Rod's role has been to reverse-engineer alien technology and divulge secrets about his home planet"



Right: J Rod became popularised over the years in the media. Is he really working for the government?

© Alamy; Getty; Shutterstock

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Delve into all the evidence that contact with extra-terrestrials has already been achieved

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

76...The close encounter system

78...Close encounter case files

100...Evidence of extraterrestrials

106...Terror from the skies: Alien abductions

112...The UFO hoaxes

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THE CLOSE ENCOUNTER SYSTEM

Not every UFO sighting is a true close encounter. The Hynek Scale can help you decipher the level at which you've made contact

NOCTURNAL LIGHTS

The most common form of sighting – lights appearing in the night sky.

DAYLIGHT DISCS

Most commonly flying saucers or disc-shaped objects seen during the day.

RADAR-VISUAL

UFO sightings that are confirmed by radar. Although this offers more credibility than simple sightings, radar offers no hard evidence and can be discredited thanks to atmospheric anomalies.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE FIRST KIND (CE1)

A visual sighting of any unidentified flying object that appears to be within 150m (492ft) and offers the witness considerable detail.

© Getty; Alamy; Adobe Stock/AI generator

First suggested by scientific adviser to Project Blue Book, astronomer J Allen Hynek, in his 1972 book *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry*, the Close Encounters system (also known as the Hynek Scale) is used in ufology to classify UFO sightings. The scale is ordered according to the proximity of the unidentified flying object from the witness. Sightings of a UFO that appears further than 150 metres (492 feet) are classified as 1-3 on the scale, while sightings of UFOs that are closer than 150 metres (492 feet) from the viewer are 4-6 on the scale, or subclassified as Close Encounters of the first, second or third kind. Hynek believed that sightings of objects further than 150 metres (492 feet) away are more likely to be misidentified types of conventional aircrafts or other known phenomena, so cannot be considered a Close Encounter. His scale was popularised thanks to the Steven Spielberg film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, for which he acted as a consultant and can even be spotted making a cameo during the film's climax.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE SECOND KIND (CE2)

A visual sighting with physical effect or evidence left behind. This could be interference with electrical devices or vehicle functioning, animal reactions, impressions or physical or chemical traces left in the ground or a physical impact on the witness themselves, such as paralysis, timeloss, sensations or perceived changes in temperature.

CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE THIRD KIND (CE3)

First contact has been made! Occupants or pilots of the aircraft are witnessed.

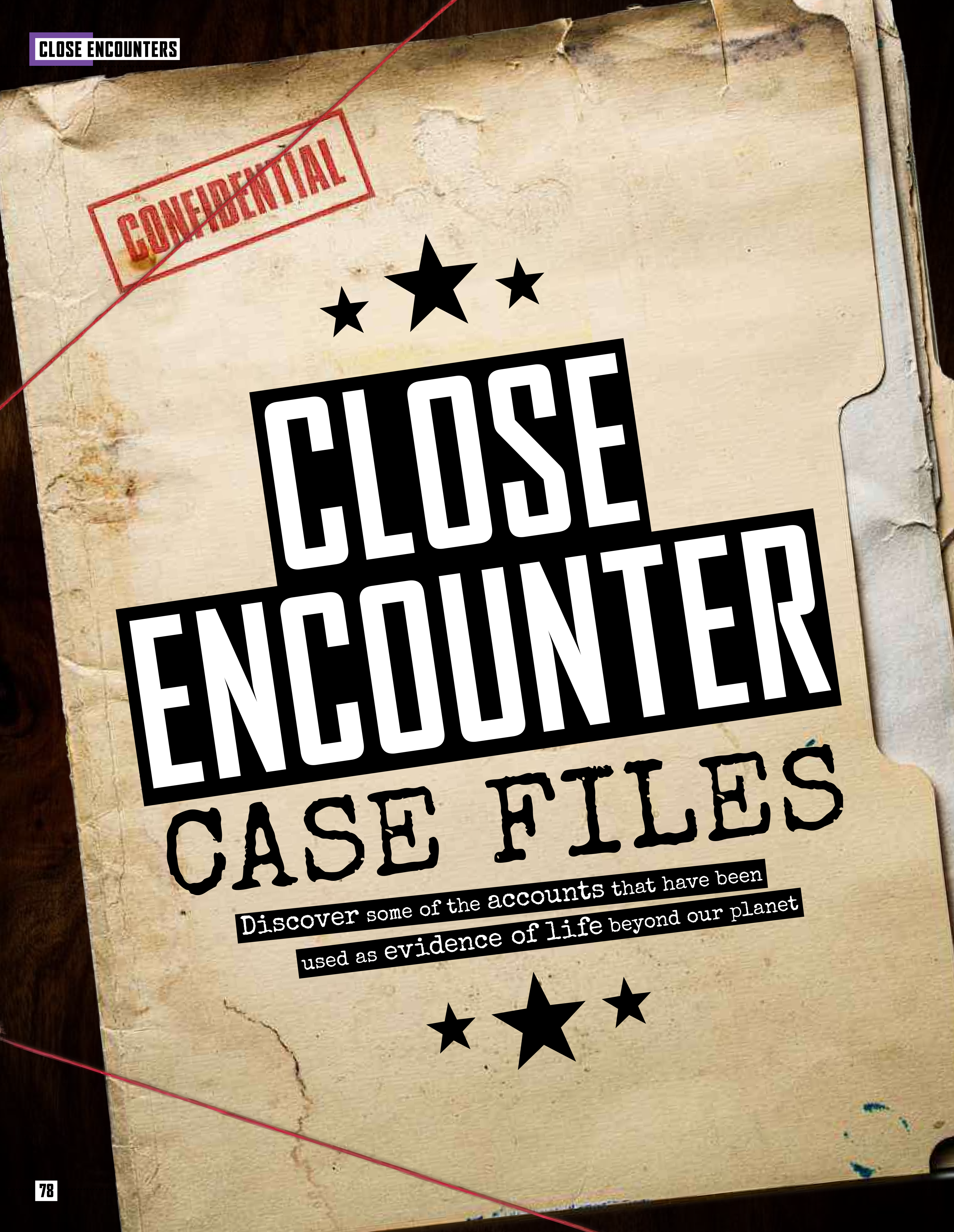
J ALLEN **HYNEK**

The man behind the system

+ Born in Chicago in 1910, Josef Allen Hynek completed his PhD in astrophysics in 1935 and later became a professor of astronomy at Ohio State University. When the United States Air Force established Project Sign in 1948, Hynek was brought onboard as scientific advisor and he continued to work with them through Project Grudge and Project Blue Book. He studied the various UFO reports and decided whether or not they were unknown phenomena or known astronomical objects.

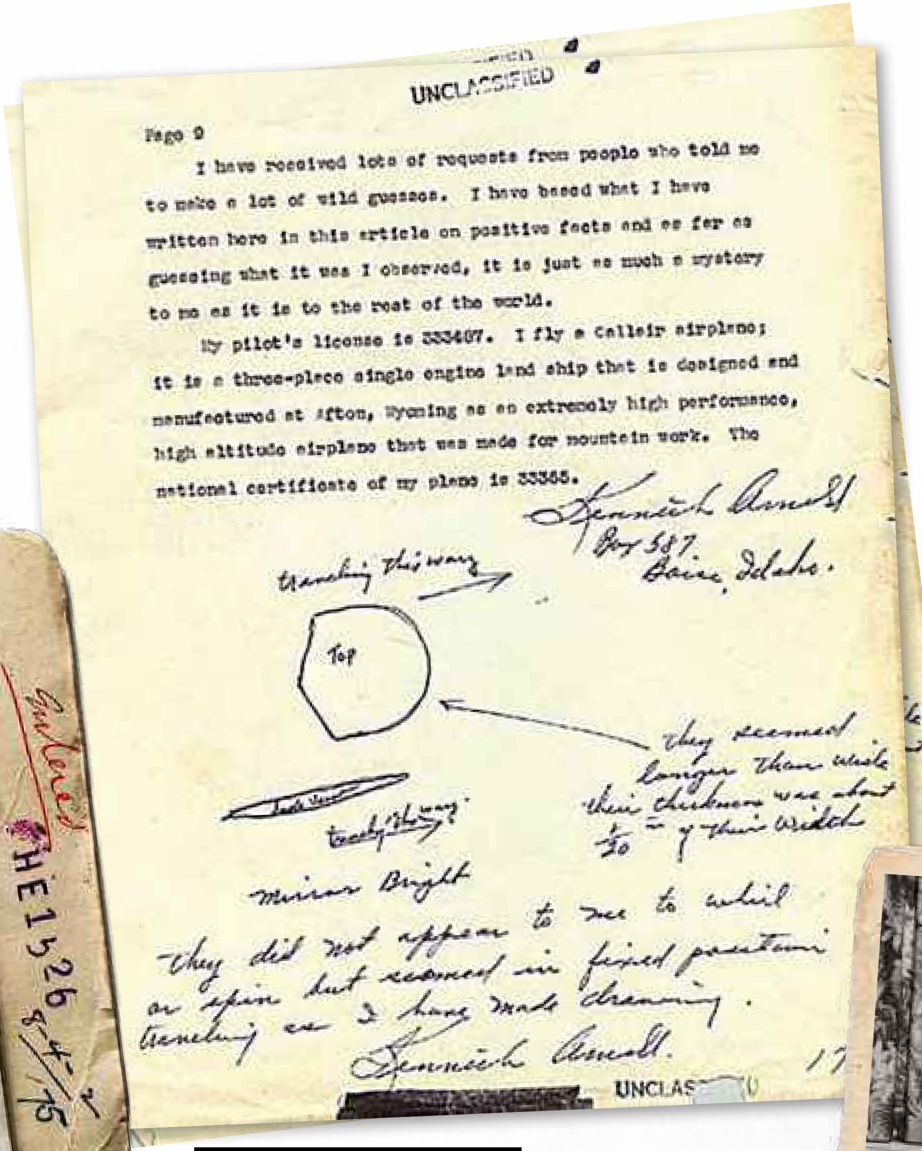
When Hynek began working for the Air Force, he was a staunch sceptic and initially believed that UFO reports were claims made by unreliable or uneducated witnesses and enjoyed debunking them. However, he was keen to take a scientific approach and later changed his attitude that the idea of UFOs being anything unusual was ridiculous, to seeing scientific value in their study. He commented that the Air Force's unyielding stance on UFOs had altered his opinion, as had the overwhelming evidence he'd witnessed: "[The US Air Force] wouldn't give UFOs the chance of existing, even if they were flying up and down the street in broad daylight. Everything had to have an explanation. I began to resent that, even though I basically felt the same way, because I still thought they weren't going about it in the right way. You can't assume that everything is black no matter what. Secondly, the calibre of the witnesses began to trouble me. Quite a few instances were reported by military pilots, for example, and I knew them to be fairly well-trained, so this is when I first began to think that, well, maybe there was something to all this."

As a result, Hynek became vocal in his opposition to the findings of Project Blue Book and the government's agenda to brand ufology a disreputable field of study, and went on to become founder of the Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) in 1973. While he never subscribed to the theory that extraterrestrials are responsible for UFO sightings, his logical scientific approach and focus on finding the truth made him an important figurehead in the field of ufology.



CLOSE ENCOUNTER CASE FILES

Discover some of the **accounts** that have been used as **evidence of life** beyond our planet



UNCLASSIFIED

Page 9

I have received lots of requests from people who told me to make a lot of wild guesses. I have based what I have written here in this article on positive facts and as far as guessing what it was I observed, it is just as much a mystery to me as it is to the rest of the world.

My pilot's license is 333487. I fly a Callair airplane; it is a three-place single engine land ship that is designed and manufactured at Afton, Wyoming as an extremely high performance, high altitude airplane that was made for mountain work. The national certificate of my plane is 33355.

Kenneth Arnold
Box 587
Boise, Idaho.

traveling this way

Top

they seemed longer than wide their thickness was about 1/20 of their width

traveling this way?

Mirror Bright

they did not appear to me to whirl or spin but seemed in fixed position traveling as I have made drawing.

Kenneth Arnold.

[redacted]

UNCLAS

THE ROSWELL INCIDENT

Filed By Agent K

Date June-July 1947

Location New Mexico, USA

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description The Roswell Incident remains one of the most contentious events in ufology. In 1947 a craft of alien origin was believed to have crashed in the desert of Roswell, New Mexico. The US Air Force (USAF) were reported to have recovered both the ship and its alien occupants. In the period following the discovery of debris, numerous witnesses, including military personnel, presented reports of alien bodies and governmental cover-ups, some of which inferred that alien technology was being held within the nearby air base. The USAF initially claimed they were in possession of a "flying disc", before later changing their story.

> "The US Air Force were reported to have recovered both the ship and its alien occupants"

KENNETH ARNOLD

Filed By Agent C

Date 24 June 1947

Location Mount Rainier, Washington, US

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 2

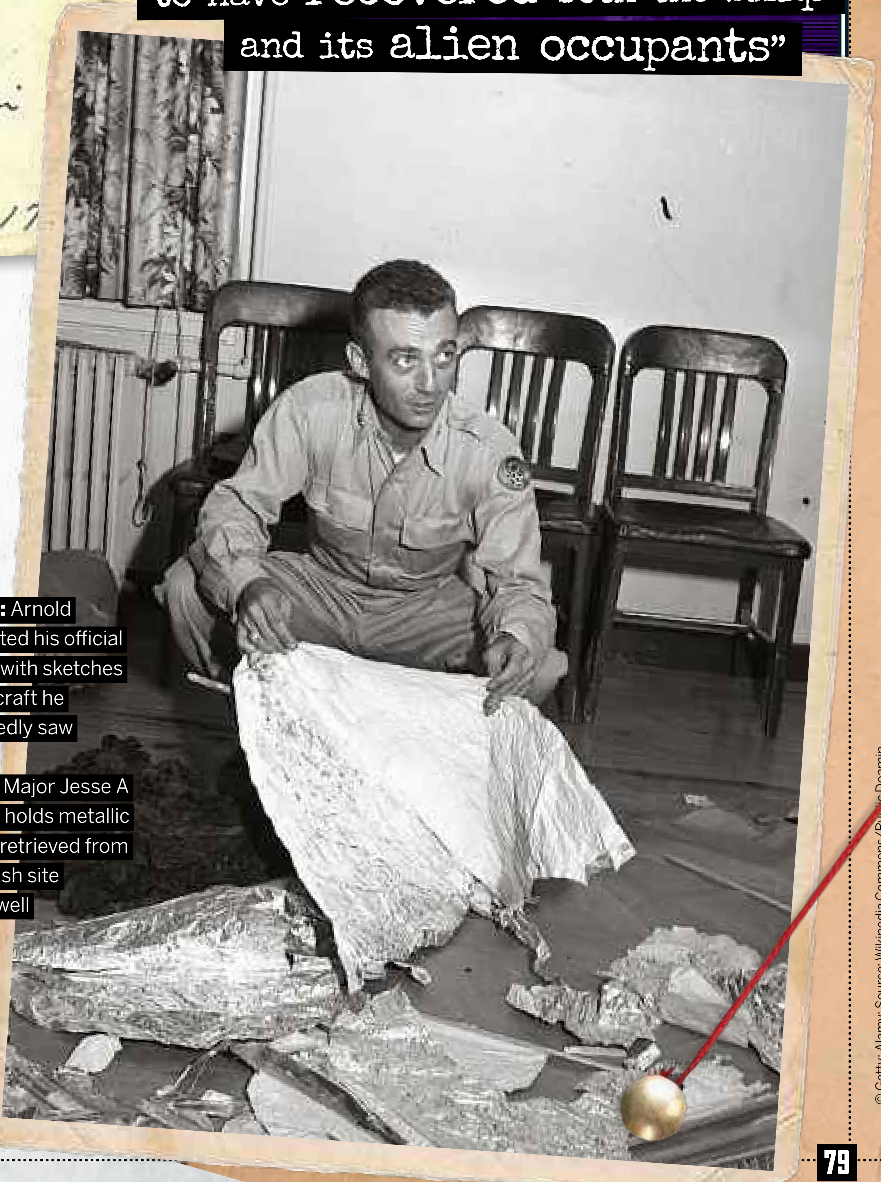
Incident Description Private pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying a CallAir A-2 over Mount Rainier, searching for a missing military plane. Arnold reported bright light at 15:00, 2,804km (9,200ft) in altitude. Initial light was followed in chain by eight more, moving erratically and giving off bright flashes. Described by Arnold as moving like saucers skipping on water, often in unison. Estimated speed at 1,931kph (1,200mph) minimum. Arnold initially believed he was witnessing military test flights.

[redacted]

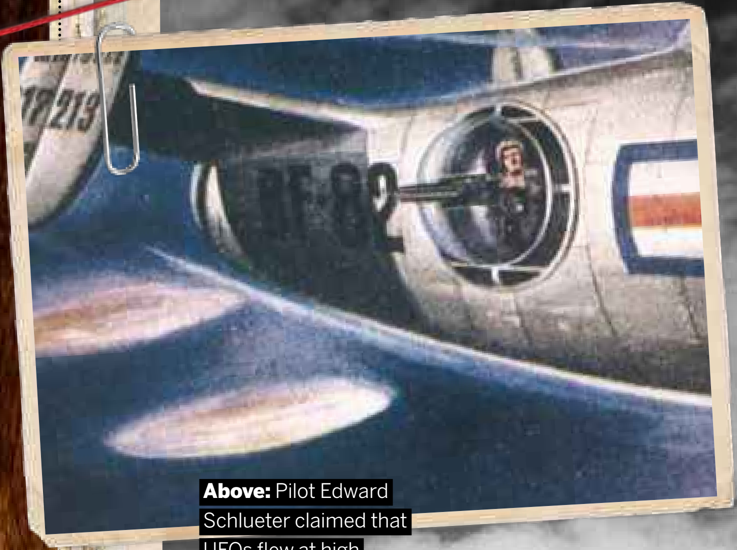
UPDATE Multiple corroborating witnesses came forward following initial reports. [redacted]

Above: Arnold illustrated his official report with sketches of the craft he reportedly saw

Right: Major Jesse A Marcel holds metallic debris retrieved from the crash site at Roswell



© Getty; Alamy; Source: Wikipedia Commons/Public Domain



Above: Pilot Edward Schlueter claimed that UFOs flew at high speed alongside his plane for several minutes before simply disappearing

Left: The squadron crew were all experienced pilots who knew the difference between unusual weather conditions and a UFO

THE FOO FIGHTERS

Filed By Agent J

Date November 1944 and throughout latter WWII

Location Over European and Pacific war zones

UFO Type Glowing fireballs

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description Various Night Fighter squadrons encountered a series of bright, coloured lights, ranging from orange, to red, to green. Despite aerial displays and speeds of up to 322kph (200mph), neither airborne radar nor ground control registered anything occurring. The lights exhibited extreme manoeuvrability and impressive dexterity. Multiple sightings of the lights were recorded. [redacted]

Lt Fred Schlueter witnessed ten orange lights in a row on the France-Germany border. Lights vanished when the pilot turned the plane to fly towards them.

Six red and green lights spotted over Germany in a T formation the next month. It shadowed the pilot at roughly 304m (1,000ft), then vanished.

On 22 December 1944, crew spotted orange lights that rose from the ground to 3,050m (10,000ft), following the pilots at speed, only to peel off and disappear. [redacted]

Lt Samuel A Krasney witnessed a red, glowing, wingless object in the shape of a cigar just off the plane's wingtip. Pilot failed to shake the object despite evasive manoeuvres. After a few minutes the object held back and vanished.

Lights nicknamed 'Foo Fighters' as a joke relating to a popular comic strip.

Multiple theories were espoused as to the source of the UFOs but all were rejected by the experienced pilots. Suggested explanations included flares, weather balloons, St Elmo's fire and even the work of Nazi astrophysicists. None were considered credible by the squadrons.

UPDATE The Robertson Panel, consisting of a panel of aviation technology experts, looked into the claims in 1953. No official conclusion given. The Foo Fighter incidents remain a mystery.

> "Lt Samuel A Krasney witnessed a red, glowing, wingless object in the shape of a cigar just off the plane's wingtip"

Above: The American government feared that the strange 'Foo Fighters' were German V-2 rockets, a long-range guided ballistic missile, rather than alien spaceships

MANTELL CRASH

Filed By Agent K

Date 7 January 1948

Location Franklin, Kentucky, US

UFO Type Dirigible

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description Kentucky Air National Guard captain, Thomas F Mantell Jr, dispatched in P-51 Mustang to investigate craft. Reported rounded top with conical balloon shape beneath. Mantell pursued target in steep climb, ignoring warnings to level out from wingmen who had dropped back due to lack of oxygen on board. Captain Mantell continued chase. Mantell blacked out from lack of oxygen and suffered fatal crash. [redacted]

UPDATE Project Blue Book concluded Mantell was chasing top secret Skyhook balloon when killed.

Source: Wikipedia Commons/ Public Domain

Above: Captain Mantell fearlessly pursued a UFO and paid the ultimate price

GORMAN DOGFIGHT

Filed By Agent C

Date 1 October 1948

Location Fargo, North Dakota, US

UFO Type Anomalous light

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description At 20:30, North Dakota national guardsman George F Gorman participated in cross-country flying exercise in P-51 Mustang. Gorman reported clear skies other than blinking light to west. Gorman pursued and attempted to intercept object. Upon closing, reported ball of light 15cm (6in) in diameter. Gorman pursued object to 4,267m (14,000ft) and experienced near collision. Object outpaced Gorman, exceeding 644kph (400mph) and climbed vertically out of range. Sighting corroborated by other witnesses.

UPDATE USAF concluded object was weather balloon.

CHILES-WHITTED

Filed By Agent C

Date 24 July 1948

Location Montgomery, Alabama, US

UFO Type Cigar

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description 02:45: Commercial pilots Clarence S Chiles and John B Whitted encountered glowing object while piloting Eastern Air Lines Douglas DC-3 at 1,524m (5,000ft). Skies were clear. Chiles witness red glow above and ahead and alerted Whitted. Craft passed plane on right side before ascending into clouds with burst of flame. Chiles-Whitted reported object 30m (100ft) long and 9.1km (30ft) in diameter, with two rows of windows.

UPDATE One passenger on board DC-3 corroborated sighting. Reported to USAF.

[redacted]

Above left: [redacted]

Right: Sceptics dismissed the experienced pilots' strange sighting as being a meteoroid

Right: Some ufologists have accepted that a weather balloon was to blame for the sighting

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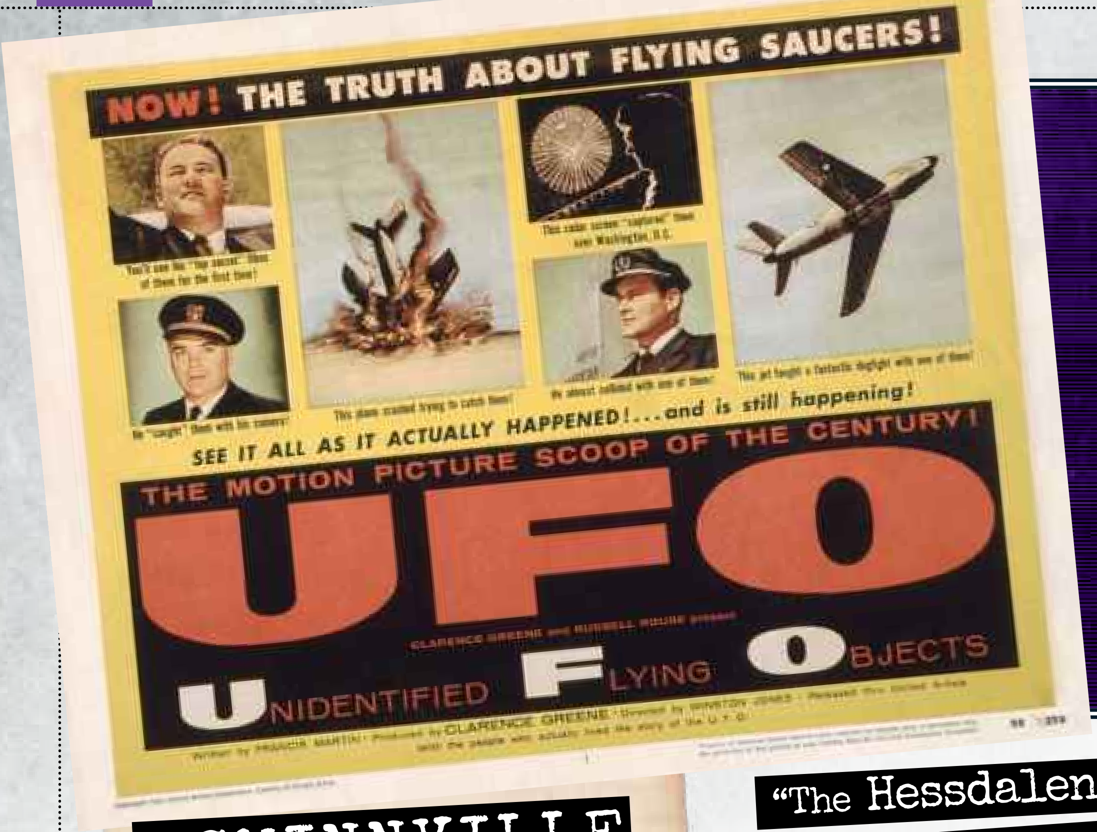

NOW! THE TRUTH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS!
SEE IT ALL AS IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED!...and is still happening!
THE MOTION PICTURE SCOOP OF THE CENTURY!
UFO
UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS
CLARENCE GREENE

MARIANA FILM

Filed By Agent C

Date 15 August 1950

Location Great Falls, Montana, US

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description Minor-league baseball manager, Nick Mariana, and his secretary, Virginia Raunig, witnessed bright flash and two silver objects over baseball stadium. Objects were moving 320-640kph (200-400mph).

[redacted]

Object width estimated at 15m (50ft). Mariana captured 16 seconds of UFO activity on film.

UPDATE Mariana claimed the film was later cut by USAF.

MCMINNVILLE PHOTOS

Filed By Agent C

Date 11 May 1950

Location McMinnville, Oregon, US

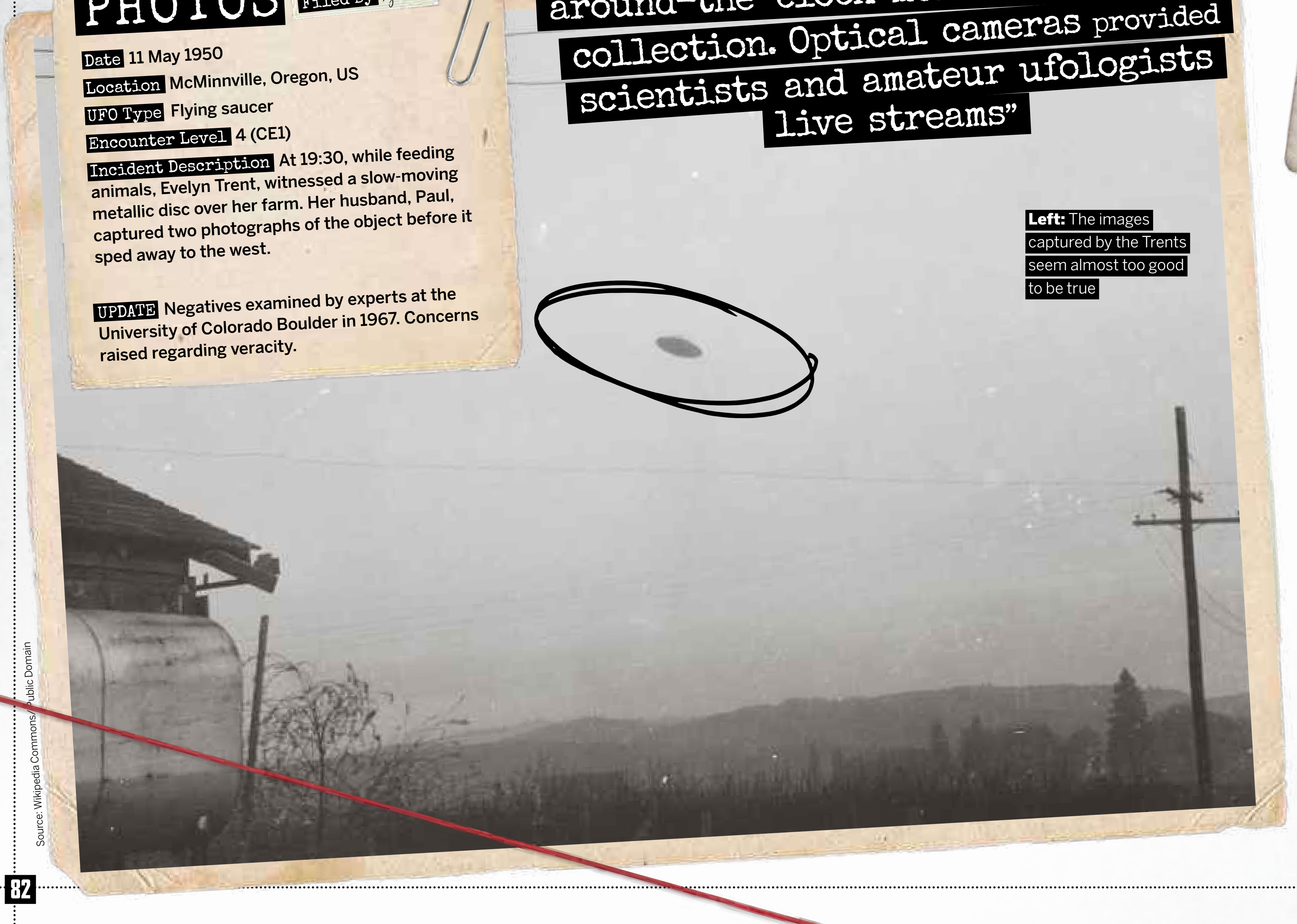
UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

Incident Description At 19:30, while feeding animals, Evelyn Trent, witnessed a slow-moving metallic disc over her farm. Her husband, Paul, captured two photographs of the object before it sped away to the west.

UPDATE Negatives examined by experts at the University of Colorado Boulder in 1967. Concerns raised regarding veracity.

> "The Hessdalen Automatic Measurement Station was set up in 1998 to provide around-the-clock monitoring and data collection. Optical cameras provided scientists and amateur ufologists live streams"



Left: The images captured by the Trents seem almost too good to be true

Source: Wikipedia Commons/Public Domain

HESSDALEN LIGHTS

Filed By Agent)

Date 1930s onwards

Location Hessdalen Valley, Norway

UFO Type Unidentified bright lights

Encounter Level 1 & 2

Incident Description One of the most witnessed unidentified aerial phenomena in recorded history, spanning almost a century but peaking across the 1980s. Sightings vary from shooting lights across the night sky, floating orbs that hang in the air for hours, blue and white flashes, multicoloured lights that separate and then come together and metallic objects that move across the daylight sky.

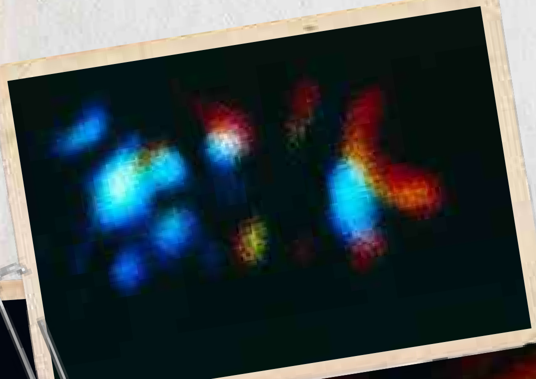
Between Christmas 1981 and summer 1984, sightings increased to 20 per week. Activity has decreased to approximately 20 sightings per year since 2010.

Project Hessdalen was set up in 1983 by two Nordic UFO research organisations – UFO Norge and UFO Sverige – the goal being to gather data and attempt to find a credible explanation for the phenomena. Project Hessdalen struggled to ascertain one specific cause of the sightings, since the lights themselves were too varied.

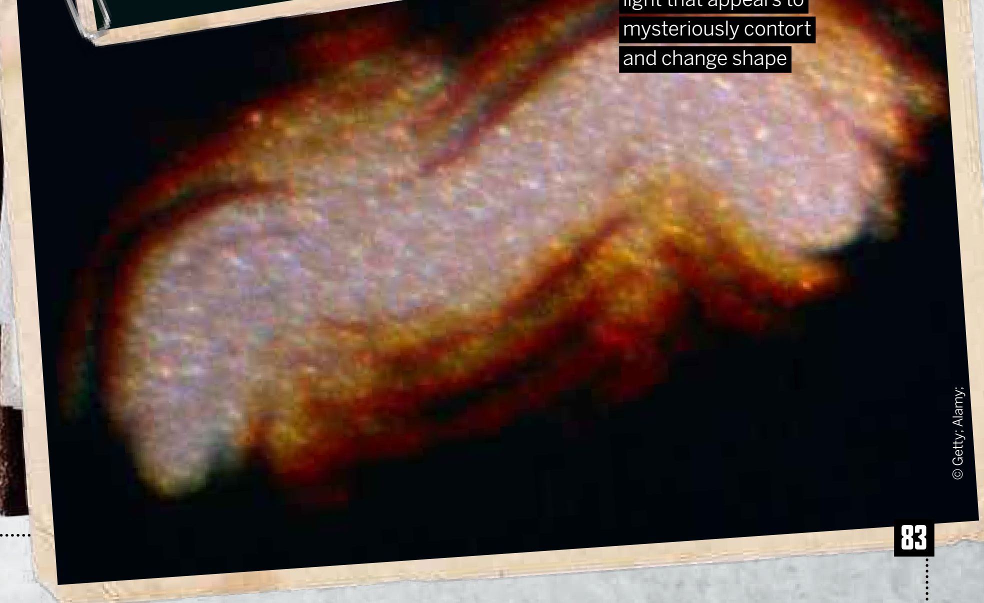
The Triangle Project, active from 1997-98, consisted of engineers, students and journalists. Their mission, to capture a strange phenomenon of pyramidal lights that 'ping-ponged' back and forth over the Hessdalen Valley. [redacted]

The Hessdalen Automatic Measurement Station was set up in 1998 to provide around-the-clock monitoring and data collection. Optical cameras provided scientists and amateur ufologists live streams. Temperature and humidity gauges, radio receivers and magnetometers were put in place to capture any abnormal environmental fluctuations.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology and a further research team, known as EMBLA, have also lent their expertise to establish a plausible explanation. Theories from combustible gas to radon decay have been raised but many still believe this is an extraterrestrial hotspot.



Left: This image, taken in 2014, clearly depicts a UFO splitting up and changing colour from white to blue to orange and, finally, a deep red



Below: This photograph, taken over the Hessdalen Valley in 1983, shows a light that appears to mysteriously contort and change shape

© Getty; Alamy;

Below: The lights captured by Carl Hart Jr on 30 August 1951 over Lubbock

LUBBOCK LIGHTS

Date 25 August 1951

Location Lubbock, Texas

UFO Type Nocturnal lights

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description 21:20: Three Texas Technical College scientists saw 15-30 blue-green lights flying overhead in V-formation. Lights returned an hour later. Man with high-level security clearance saw them over Albuquerque, New Mexico, along the wing edges of a silent aeroplane. Over two weeks, hundreds of Lubbock residents saw the lights. Carl Hart Jr (Texas Tech student) photographed V-formation on 30 August 1951. Unclear if photos were genuine or fake. Scientists launched an [redacted] investigation; residents' reports lined up with their notes. US Air Force also investigated in September 1951; they believed lights were plover birds. Case remains unsolved. [redacted]

THE WASHINGTON FLAP

Filed By Agent J

Date 12-29 July 1952

Location Washington DC

UFO Type Bright lights

Encounter Level 3

Incident Description A vast number of UFO sightings were reported across July 1952, but peaked on two consecutive Saturdays (19 and 26). On 19 July, air-traffic controller Edward Nugent spotted seven objects that failed to follow any known civilian or military flight paths. Other controllers working at the Washington National Airport witnessed a bright light that sped away at phenomenal speed.

Radar operators at Andrews Air Force Base were tracking clusters of slow-moving lights that suddenly flew off at over 11,260kph (7,000mph).

An orange ball of fire trailing a glowing tail was seen by another experienced controller.

Commercial pilots reported seeing six unusually bright lights 'falling' from the sky and then vanishing.

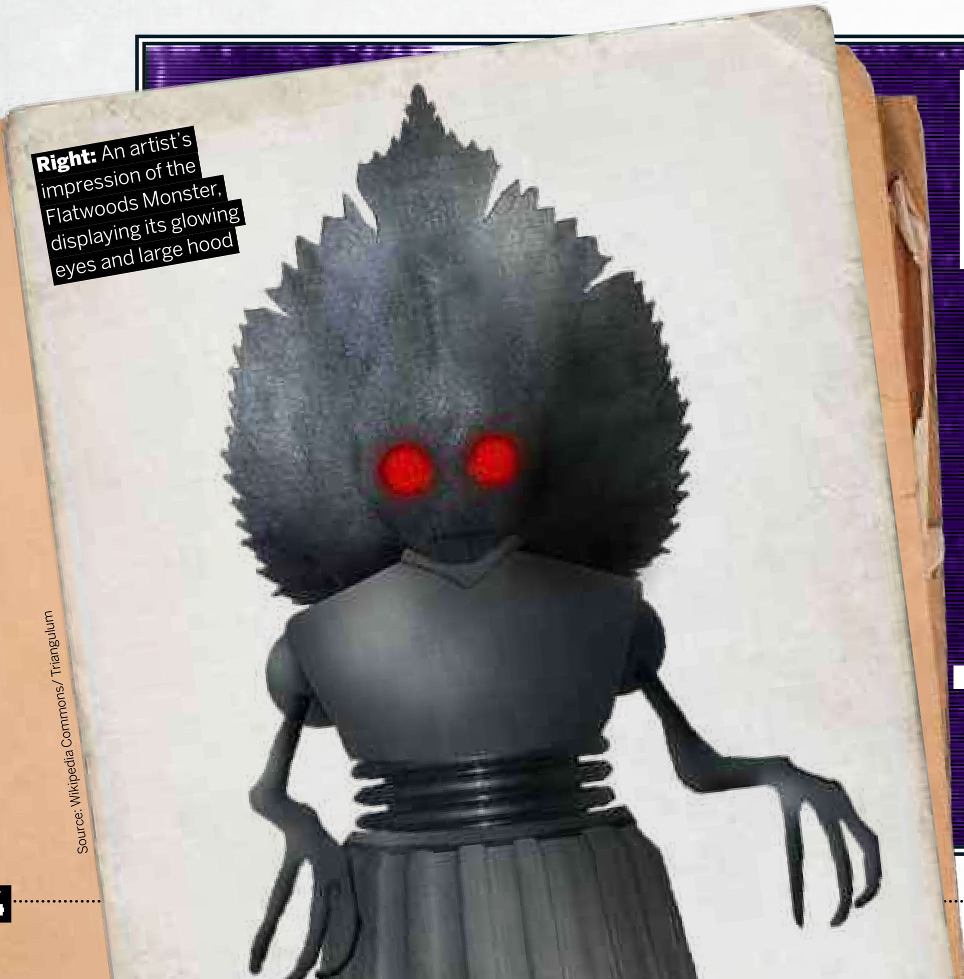
Two F-94 interceptor jets were scrambled when the lights were spotted over the White House and Capitol Building but upon their arrival, the lights winked out and disappeared.

The UFOs returned on Saturday, 26 July. Jet pilots were once again tasked with chasing down the lights as they appeared on the Andrews Air Base radars. Pilots attempted to keep up with the UFOs as they sped across Washington but, even at maximum speed, they failed to match their movements.

Right: Sighting of UFOs over the White House prompted President Harry Truman to call on Project Blue Book for an explanation

Below right: On 14 September 2023, NASA attended a conference in Washington DC to discuss the agency created to research into UFOs

A press conference was quickly called in a bid to avoid widespread panic and Major General John Samford calmly explained that the lights were due to the temperature inversion theory – nothing more than an unusual weather phenomenon. Despite the explanations led by the government, Captain Edward Ruppelt, leader of Project Blue Book, and experienced radar operators were not convinced.



Right: An artist's impression of the Flatwoods Monster, displaying its glowing eyes and large hood

Source: Wikipedia Commons/ Triangulum

THE FLATWOODS MONSTER

Filed By Agent K

Date 12 September 1952

Location Virginia, USA

UFO Type Nocturnal lights

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

Incident Description In 1952, the sighting of an unknown creature in Braxton County, West Virginia, led to the establishment of a US Air Force enquiry into UFO sightings, known as Project Blue Book. On the evening of 12 September, three young boys witnessed a bright light move across the sky and land within the property of a nearby farm. [redacted] Hearing of this story, several people, including a member of the National Guard, travelled to an overlooking hill to investigate the site. The group reported seeing a pulsing red light and glimpsed a tall, humanoid figure with a red face and large, pointed hood.

GREEN FIREBALLS

Filed By Agent J

Date 1948 onwards

Location New Mexico and Southwestern US

UFO Type Green balls of fire

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description On 5 December 1948, two separate aeroplane crew members witnessed a green ball of fire hurtling across New Mexico and, at one point, heading straight for the aircraft. Three days later, two pilots witnessed another green, glowing ball of fire. The sightings were concentrated around top-secret atomic-weapons laboratories in Los Alamos and Sandia, fighter-interceptor bases, and other sensitive military stations, causing concern among members of the American government.

Although initially thought to be a meteor, intelligence officers failed to find any meteorite where it should have hit.

Eight further sightings occurred in the following days, including one fireball on 20 December, which started to fall but then stopped and hovered in the air, defying gravity. This was clearly not a meteor. More than 100 witnesses came forward and were interviewed by intelligence officers from New Mexico's Institute of Meteoritics, who agreed that the fireballs did not follow the pattern of meteors.

Subsequent suggestions as to the identification of the fireballs included ball lightning and other natural phenomena following electric field lines, while some believed the eerie green lights were clouds of debris following top-secret atomic testing.

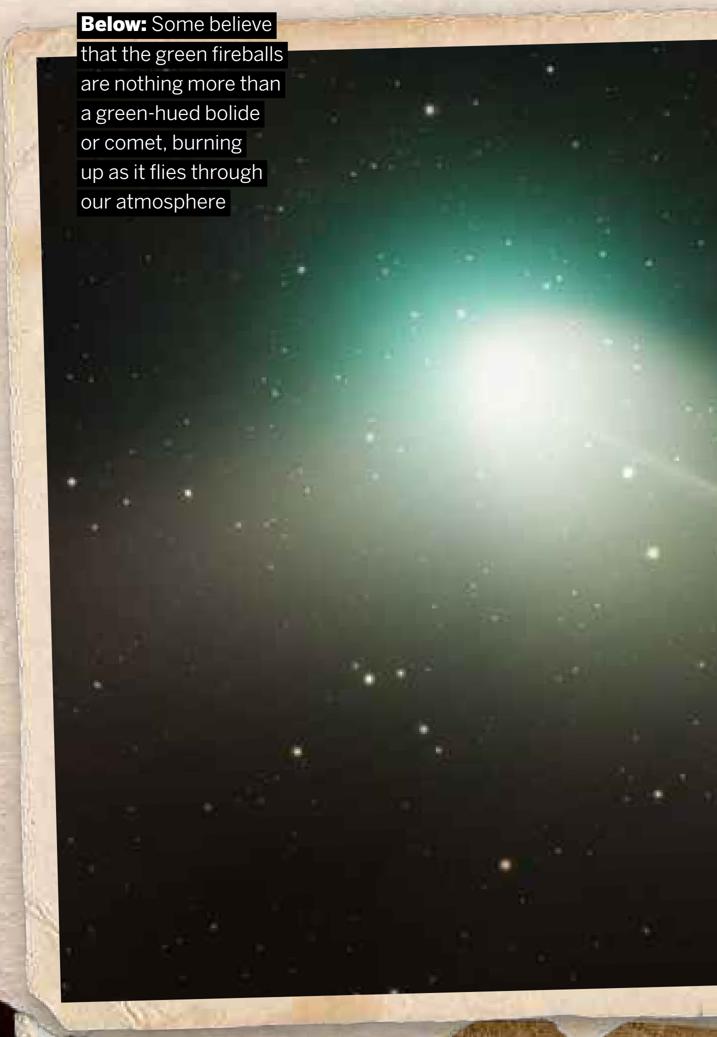
Scientists from the Los Alamos National Laboratory who witnessed the UFOs remained adamant that they had seen some form of extraterrestrial probes or interplanetary craft.

UPDATE Over 170 further green fireball sightings have occurred around the world from South Africa to Canada and over the Netherlands. To date, no one has conclusively proven what they are or where they come from.

Below: A green fireball was witnessed by hundreds of fans during an aptly-named Foo Fighters concert in June 2018. The audience simply thought that it was part of the show!

Below right: The Los Alamos Laboratory was a highly sensitive site where nuclear weapons were being designed for the Manhattan Project

Below: Some believe that the green fireballs are nothing more than a green-hued bolide or comet, burning up as it flies through our atmosphere



© Getty; Alamy

DRURY AFFAIR

Filed By Agent C

Date 23 August 1953

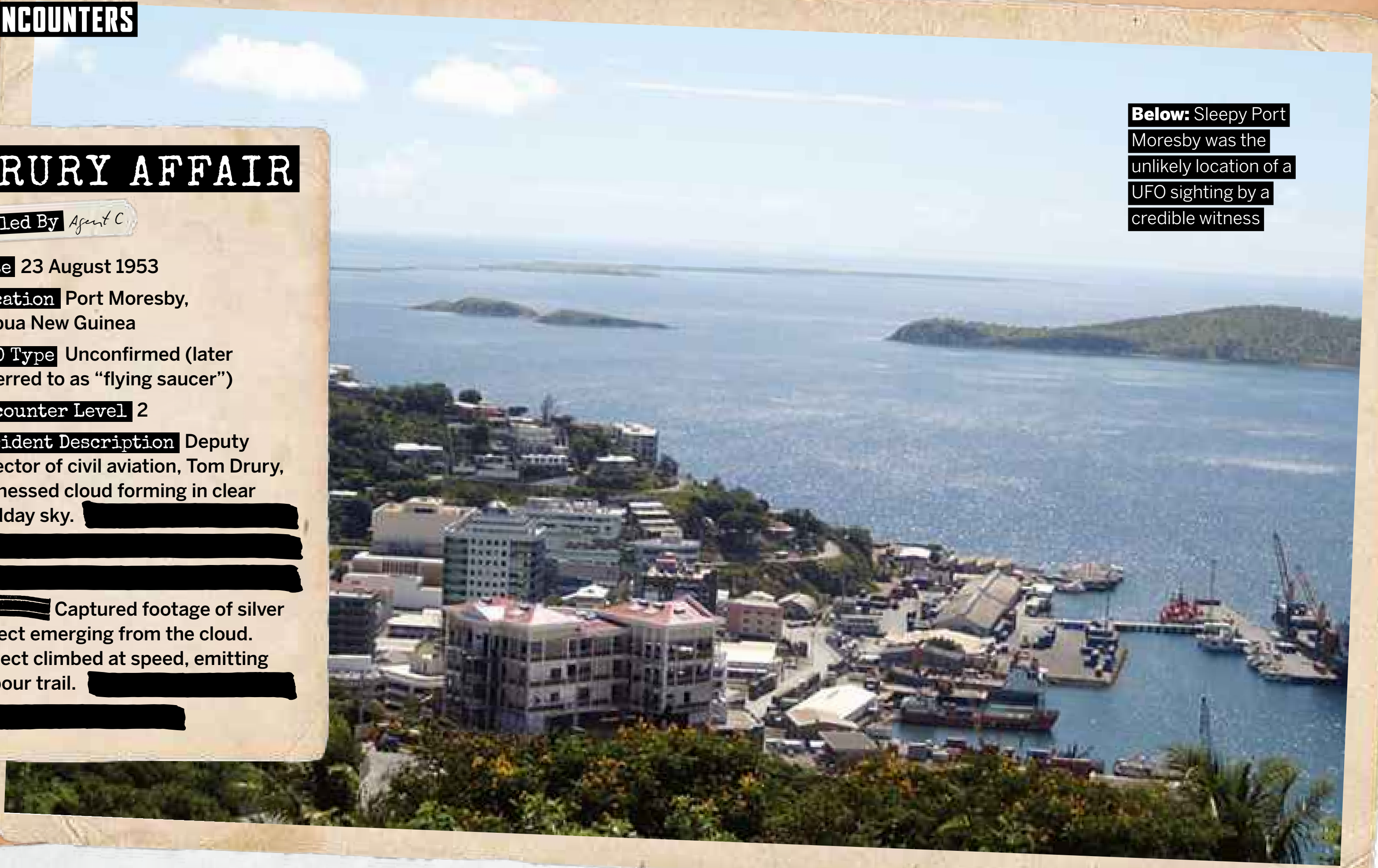
Location Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

UFO Type Unconfirmed (later referred to as "flying saucer")

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description Deputy director of civil aviation, Tom Drury, witnessed cloud forming in clear midday sky. [redacted]

[redacted] Captured footage of silver object emerging from the cloud. Object climbed at speed, emitting vapour trail. [redacted]



Below: Sleepy Port Moresby was the unlikely location of a UFO sighting by a credible witness

ELIZABETH KLARER

Filed By Agent C

Date 1954-63

Location Mooi River, South Africa

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description Elizabeth Klarer reported encounters with extraterrestrial beings from the age of seven, when a silver disc hovered over her home, the same time as orange planetoid was observed. Klarer reports subsequent encounters with Venusian being named Akon on a site known as Flying Saucer Hill. Made visits to spaceship and alien planet. Relationship with Akon reportedly became intimate in 1950s. Kramer claims she bore Akon a child named Ayling. Ayling remained on home planet of Meton.

UPDATE Klarer died in 1994. Her pregnancy remains uncorroborated.

Below: Elizabeth Klarer claimed that her alien child was conceived on the plateau of Cathkin Peak

Right: Was it aliens, owls or just fertile imaginations that terrorised the farmhouse in Hopkinsville?

KELLY-HOPKINSVILLE ENCOUNTER

Filed By Agent C

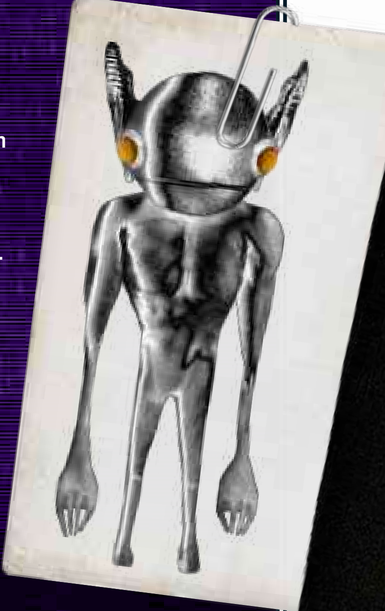
Date 21 August 1955

Location Hopkinsville, Kentucky, USA

UFO Type None

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description Five adults and seven children attended local police station in distress. Reported that their farmhouse had been besieged for nearly four hours by aliens who had arrived via spaceship. Alleged victims of attack defended house with gunfire. Witnesses Elmer Sutton and Billy Ray Taylor reported an unspecified number of attackers, later reported as roughly one dozen. Described attackers as small and dark, clustered at windows and around door. Police attended. Officers reported evidence of gunfire around doors and windows. No intruders or casualties reported.



UPDATE Further reports of glowing eyes and claws do not appear in initial statements.

LEVELLAND, TEXAS

Filed By Agent C

Date 2-3 November 1957

Location Levelland, Texas, USA

UFO Type Cigar

Encounter Level 5 (CE2)

Incident Description Farm workers Pedro Saucedo and Joe Salaz phoned police to report blue flash and rocket-shaped craft that approached their broken-down truck. Object passed over vehicle with roaring sound, heat and wind. Police recorded call as a prank. On same evening, witness Jim Wheeler reported egg-shaped object, 61m (200ft) long, blocking road. As in previous report, his engine failed and only restarted when craft had departed. Multiple similar reports received that night and in early hours of following day, including Sheriff Weir Clem, who witnessed red light craft speeding through sky.

UPDATE USAF investigation attempted to explain reports away as ball lightning.

Right: Drivers found their vehicles incapacitated by a mysterious craft on a lonely road

> "Object landed on three extended supports, then took off when witnesses approached"

GORDON COOPER UFO SIGHTINGS

Filed By Agent C

Date 3 May 1957

Location Edwards Air Force Base, California, USA

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

Incident Description Engineer, USAF pilot and Project Mercury astronaut, Gordon Cooper, discussed alleged UFO conspiracy in his autobiography, *Leap of Faith*, and multiple sightings. While trialling precision landings systems at Edwards, Cooper received credible witness reports of a saucer-shaped object hovering above test site. Object landed on three extended supports, then took off when witnesses approached. [redacted] Cooper confirmed clear photographs had been taken during tests that showed UFOs. Witness believed images had been seized by government; no subsequent investigation was made despite multiple reports of unidentified craft. [redacted]

UPDATE Cooper attested US government was concealing concrete evidence of alien contact.

Right: Astronaut Gordon Cooper claimed that the US government were covering up alien contact

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THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Filed By Agent J

Date Ongoing

Location North Atlantic Ocean

UFO Type Various

Encounter Level Various

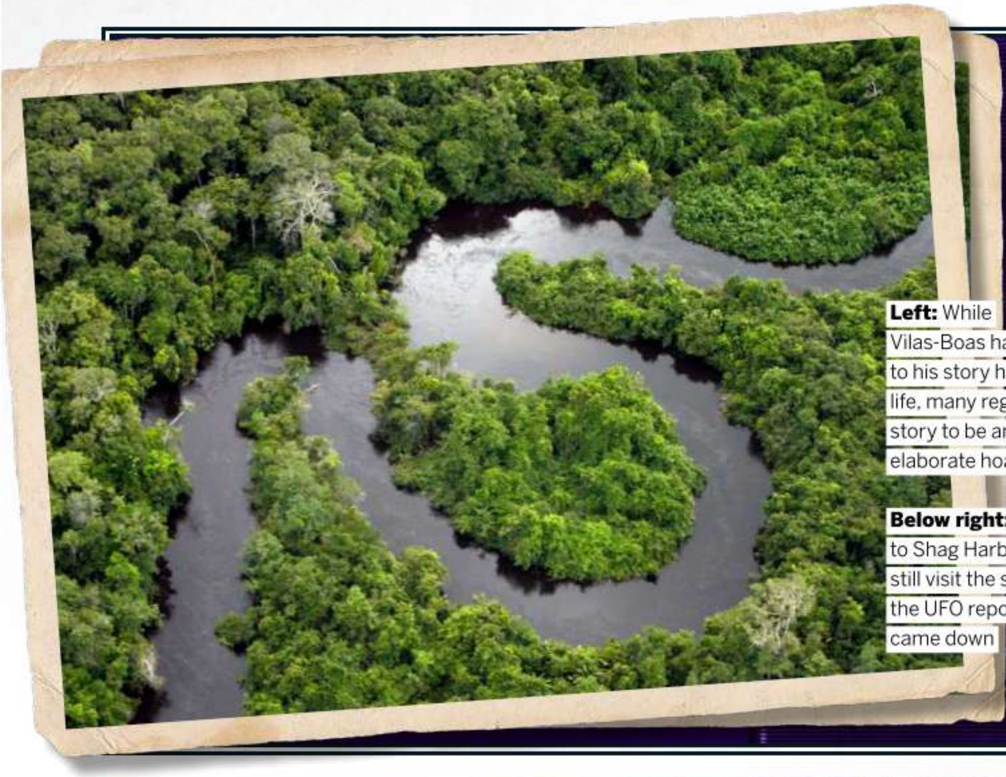
Incident Description The Bermuda Triangle is a term used to describe a loosely defined area in the North Atlantic Ocean, where many ships and planes are said to have disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Reports that this area was experiencing a high level of unexplained disappearances first appeared in 1950 in an article within *The Miami Herald*. Two years after this assertion, the area was named and further defined as a 'watery triangle' in the publication, *Fate*. The first cases linked to this triangle of ocean were several ships missing during WWII, followed by various passenger aircraft and fishing vessels, all of which disappeared for unknown reasons. [redacted] There have been several proposed natural explanations for disappearances within the Bermuda Triangle, including extreme weather patterns, the Gulf Stream and human error.

Paranormal explanations persist and offer a wide range of supernatural reasonings for the number of wrecks and disappearances. The lost city of Atlantis has long been cited as a possible reason for this phenomena, with perceived residual technology interfering with contemporary navigation systems. Alternative explanations include wormholes, time slips and sea serpents. UFO sightings have long persisted within the area from both land and sea. Many believe that abductions and direct attacks have happened within the triangle as a result of UFOs and alien technologies, with others proposing that a suboceanic alien base lies at its centre. [redacted]

The triangle's borders are constantly redefined, with its nature and existence frequently questioned due to the inclusion of recorded air disasters and disappearances explained by terrestrial means.

> "Paranormal explanations persist and offer a wide range of supernatural reasonings for the number of wrecks and disappearances"

Below: For decades, scientists have tried to explain the hundreds of mysterious disappearances within the Bermuda Triangle



Left: While Vilas-Boas has stuck to his story his whole life, many regard his story to be an elaborate hoax

Below right: Visitors to Shag Harbour can still visit the site where the UFO reportedly came down

ANTÔNIO VILAS-BOAS

Filed By Agent K

Date 15 October 1957

Location São Francisco de Sales, Brazil

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description Antônio Vilas-Boas was a Brazilian farmer who claimed to have been abducted by aliens in 1957. When ploughing fields late at night, he saw a bright red light, which expanded into an egg-shaped spacecraft. Fleeing the scene, he was seized by a humanoid creature, which dragged him inside the craft. Inside, Villas-Boas was medically tested before having sexual intercourse with one of the beings, resulting in pregnancy. Villas-Boas returned four hours after the abduction and reportedly suffered a radiation-induced sickness.

BARNEY AND BETTY HILL

Filed By Agent K & Agent A

Date 19-20 September 1961

Location New Hampshire, USA

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description Postal worker Barney Hill and his wife Betty, a social worker, noticed a strange light following their car south of Lancaster NH, through White Mountains, US Route 3. Couple stopped their car south of Twin Mountain to walk their dog. Couple reported wide, flat, metallic "pancake" shaped disc landing on the roof of the car, south of Indian Head. Object emitted a beeping noise that caused loss of consciousness (duration: two hours). [redacted]

[redacted] Barney reported between eight and 11 humanoid figures dressed in black inside the spacecraft who communicated to him telepathically. Couple awoke 56km (35mi) down the road, clothes and shoes scuffed and torn, watches ceased functioning. Couple had no recollection of the two missing hours. The Hills found strange marks on their car, experienced odd impulses and missing memories. Reported to NICAP (21 Oct 1961). [redacted]

UPDATE Under hypnosis, the couple recounted a story of abduction where distressing medical procedures were performed upon them both, including the insertion of a long needle into Mrs Hill's navel. [redacted]

New Hampshire UFO Chiller

Left: The Hills' experience went on to define a whole genre of alien abduction stories

CRASH SITE OF THE 1967
SHAG HARBOUR
UFO
CRASH SITE OF THE 1967
SHAG HARBOUR
UFO

SHAG HARBOUR INCIDENT

Filed By Agent C

Date 4 October 1967

Location Shag Harbour, Nova Scotia

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description 19:15: 3,658m (12,000ft) out of Halifax International Airport, Air Canada first officer Robert Ralph reported brightly-lit rectangular object flying parallel to left side of aircraft, followed by string of small lights. Minutes later, aircrew witnessed two explosions near object, fading to blue cloud. Multiple witnesses on the ground and at sea reported further sightings. At 23:20, witnesses report seeing airliner or large airplane crash into Shag Harbour. Extensive rescue efforts found no evidence of wreckage or casualties. No aircraft reported missing.

UPDATE Naval divers conducted fingertip search of seafloor in days following rescue efforts. No further evidence was found.

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BETTY ANDREASSON

Filed By Agent K

Date 25 January 1967

Location Massachusetts, USA

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description Betty Andreasson reported an alien encounter in 1967, and during her abduction underwent several medical procedures, including invasive probing and penetration of her head, where a needle was inserted into her nostril to remove a small metal object. Andreasson claimed to have communicated with a higher being, which she believed to be God, who told her that she was the "chosen one". Before departing the alien craft, a being identified as Quazgaa warned her of forthcoming memory loss and implored that humans study nature in order to end their self-destructive ways. Her full story was revealed through hypnosis in 1977.

> "Andreasson claimed to have communicated with a higher being, which she believed to be, God, who told her that she was the "chosen one""

BERWYN MOUNTAIN UFO INCIDENT

Filed By Agent C

Date 23 January 1974

Location Llandrillo, Merionethshire, Wales

UFO Type Anomalous light

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description Multiple witnesses in Llandrillo and surrounding villages reported noise of explosions and bright lights in sky. Some witnesses reported lights falling from the sky to Earth, with trailing flames. Nurse Pat Evans witnessed large pulsating ball surrounded by multiple figures on mountainside. Police responded to reports of possible plane crash. No evidence of wreckage was found. No aircraft reported missing.

UPDATE Reports of meteorite received across UK that evening. British Geological Survey confirmed earthquake occurred in region at time sound of explosion was reported.

Right: Witnesses were alerted by an explosion and mysterious lights falling from the sky

TRAVIS WALTON

Filed By Agent K.

Date 5 November 1975

Location Arizona, USA

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description
Travis Walton, an American forestry worker, was the victim of an alien abduction on 5 November 1975. While working with a logging crew, Travis was reported missing after walking into a beam of white light emanating from a hovering object. Five days later, Travis was discovered confused and with a puncture mark to his arm. He claimed to have lost consciousness when walking into the beam and awoke in a medical facility, [redacted] observed by three small humanoids. Following a struggle with these creatures, Travis was sedated by humans and had no recollection of events between his abduction and return to Earth.

Above: In 1975, several loggers observed their colleague's abduction by aliens

Left: According to Andreasson, grey aliens floated through her kitchen wall, freezing her family in place

© Getty; Alamy.

TEHRAN

Filed By Agent P

Date September 1976

Location Tehran, Iran

UFO Type Anomalous light

Encounter Level 5 (CE2)

Incident Description 19 September 1976, early morning: at least four civilians reported a bright, star-like object in the sky over the Iranian capital. An Air Force jet made an approach, but their instrumentation was mysteriously "temporarily disabled". A second jet approached and met a large object, the size of a Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker, "flashing with intense red, green, orange and blue lights". Again, as the pilot attempted to launch a missile, his equipment shut down. As he retreated, the object appears to have then launched "another bright object" towards the ground, which landed implausibly gently, considering the speed.

THE PETROZAVODSK INCIDENT

Filed By Agent P

Date 20 September 1977

Location Petrozavodsk, Karelia, Russia

UFO Type Anomalous light

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

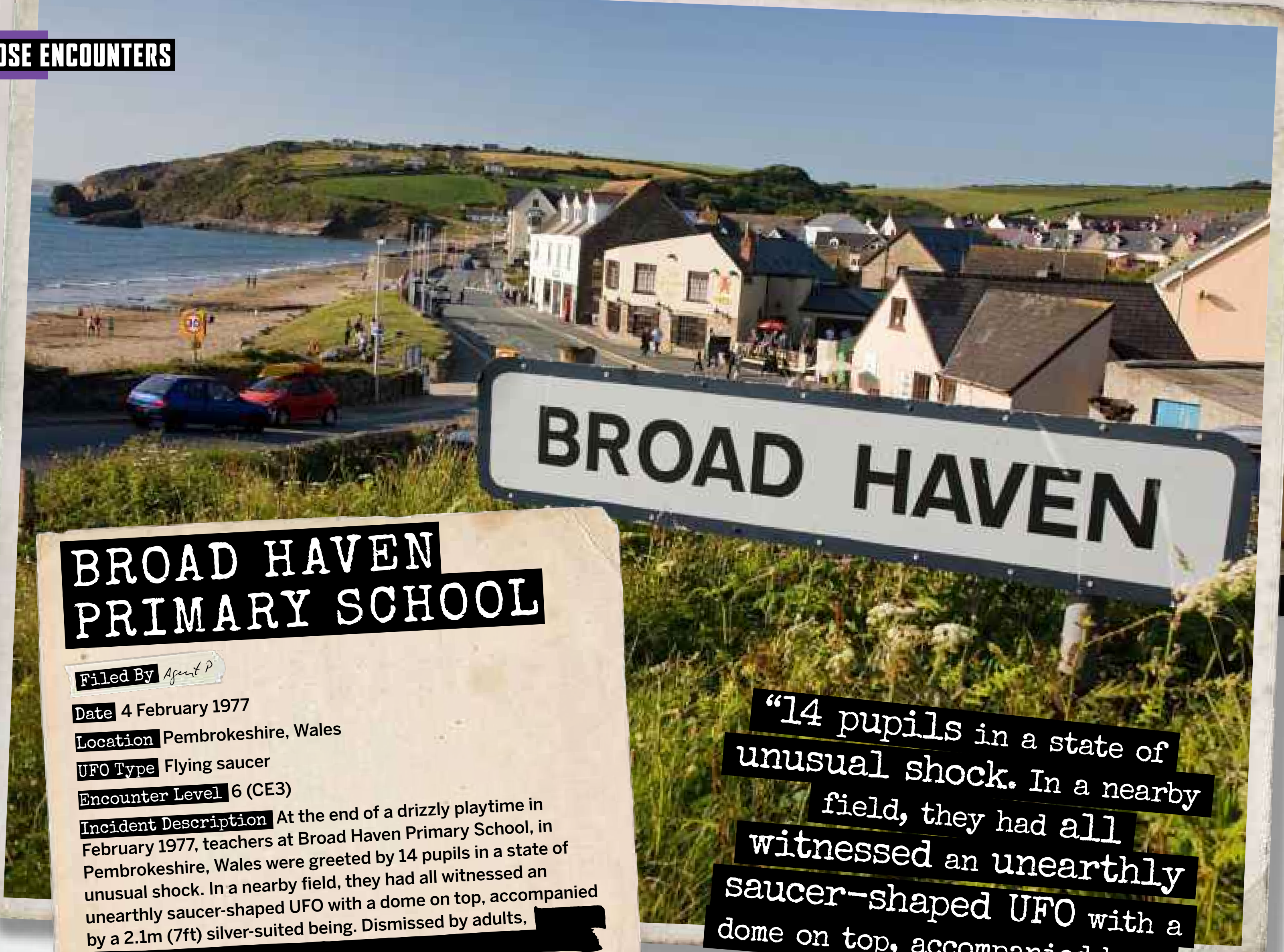
Incident Description In September 1977, over the city of Petrozavodsk, dockworkers, policemen, sailors, and even a news agency reporter witnessed, from the direction of Lake Onega, a glimmering jellyfish-like light approaching the city, before unleashing thin beams and a 'shower' of light. Its final act was not to speed away, but instead, it "punched a burning red hole in the clouds" and vanished.

[redacted]

Some reported an unusual (for the latitude and date) bloom of roses following the event. [redacted] The sighting's legacy was a generation of Soviet research. [redacted]

Above right: Multicoloured lights in the sky sparked a *Star Wars*-style space chase

Right: From over the lake's horizon a "jellyfish" of light shook residents to their core



BROAD HAVEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Filed By Agent P

Date 4 February 1977

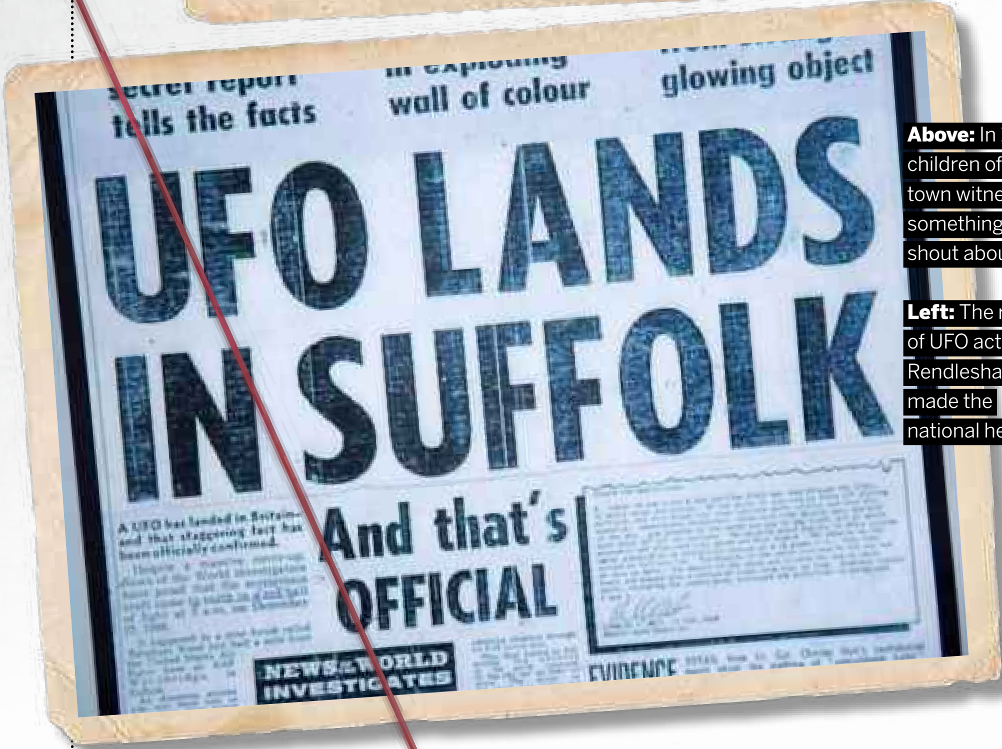
Location Pembrokeshire, Wales

UFO Type Flying saucer

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description At the end of a drizzly playtime in February 1977, teachers at Broad Haven Primary School, in Pembrokeshire, Wales were greeted by 14 pupils in a state of unusual shock. In a nearby field, they had all witnessed an unearthly saucer-shaped UFO with a dome on top, accompanied by a 2.1m (7ft) silver-suited being. Dismissed by adults, [redacted] the group circulated a petition to police, begging them to believe their testimony. The next day, separated deliberately, the children were asked to draw what they saw. The results were eerily similar.

> "14 pupils in a state of unusual shock. In a nearby field, they had all witnessed an unearthly saucer-shaped UFO with a dome on top, accompanied by a silver-suited being"


...tells the facts

...wall of colour

...glowing object

UFO LANDS IN SUFFOLK

And that's OFFICIAL

NEWS of the WORLD INVESTIGATES

EVIDENCE

Above: In 1977, the children of this quiet town witnessed something to shout about

Left: The reports of UFO activity at Rendlesham Forest made the national headlines

RENDLESHAM FOREST

Filed By Agent C

Date 26 December 1980

Location Suffolk, England

UFO Type Lights

Encounter Level 5 (CE2)

Incident Description The Rendlesham Forest Incident, commonly known as "Britain's Roswell", was a report of aerial lights close to RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk, England. These unknown lights would later be associated with a series of UFO sightings and suggestions of a cover-up effort by the Ministry of Defence. On 26 December 1980, a routine patrol saw lights fall from the sky into Rendlesham Forest. Believing it to be a downed aircraft, they investigated and happened upon a metallic craft with glowing lights. Soon afterwards, the men returned to the place of the sighting to find scorch marks and the impression of landing apparatus.

HUDSON VALLEY SIGHTINGS

Filed By Agent C

Date March 1983 – June 1984

Location New York and Connecticut, US

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description Multiple reports received from western Connecticut, Westchester County, Dutchess County and Putnam County of object in sky. Object was size of an American football pitch, V-shaped or circular. Witnesses described surrounding red, green and white lights and no sound; later reports mentioned a low hum. Object was able to hover and ascend vertically at speed. Security personnel at Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant reported the sighting to the National Guard. Sergeant Spiro of the New York State Police tracked the sightings.

UPDATE Spiro claimed pranksters responsible, flying light aircraft in formation. Reward for $1,000 in return for evidence of alleged pranksters remains unclaimed.

Left: Lights in the sky caused a security incident at Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant

WHITLEY STRIEBER

Filed By Agent K

Date 26 December 1985

Location New York, USA

UFO Type N/A

Encounter Level 6 (CE3)

Incident Description On the evening of 26 December 1985, writer Whitley Strieber claimed to have been abducted from his cabin by alien beings, known as "Visitors", before being taken into a tent in nearby woodland. Here Strieber was beaten and probed by these assailants for unknown purposes. During the attack, Strieber reported seeing a group of onlookers observing the assault, including monstrous giant insects, troll-like creatures and a personal friend who had died several months prior. Over the subsequent years, Strieber chronicled these experiences in his 1987 work, *Communion*, and reported more experiences of abduction and alien contact, some of a sexual nature.

Above: Whitley Strieber's stories of encounters with extraterrestrial 'visitors' have spanned several books

"NIGHT OF THE UFOS"

Filed By Agent F

Date 19 May 1986

Location Multiple locations, Brazil

UFO Type Anomalous light

Encounter Level 5 (CE2)

Incident Description The bright red, yellow, green and orange lights observed hovering above various airports in Brazil, one night in May, 1986, failed all identification. An air traffic controller at São José dos Campos, via binoculars, was first to observe the lights. Others followed. [redacted] Radar info showed 21 unidentified radio plots moving at almost 15 times the speed of sound, capable of sharp turns and sudden acceleration. [redacted] Three combat jets pursued from different bases, as the "presence" moved across the country, at one point "turning off"… only for 13 'plots' to re-emerge directly behind a jet sometime later. [redacted]

AEROPORTO DE SÃO JOSÉ DOS CAMPOS

Above: Strange objects led air traffic controllers and airforce across Brazil on a merry dance that fateful night

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THE BELGIUM WAVE

Filed By Agent J

Date November 1989 onwards

Location Various points across Belgium

UFO Type Flat triangular-shaped craft with lights

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

Incident Description Beginning in November 1989, multiple witnesses reported seeing a large craft flying at low altitude. Lights were observed beneath the triangular object.

On 30 March 1990, the object was caught on radar, prompting the Belgian Air Force to send out two F-16 aircraft fighters to investigate. To begin with, both pilots failed to spot the object even though a second triangle of lights was witnessed ten minutes later, heading towards the initial craft. Traffic centre control officers continued to trace the moving object on their radar screens. The F-16 pilots thought they had caught the craft on radar three times, but this turned out to be a radar lock on each other. At no point did they see any strange phenomena in the sky around them. [redacted]

Wavre gendarmerie reported hearing a low thrumming engine noise while witnessing four lights in a square formation. [redacted]

Throughout the following fortnight, 143 witnesses came forward after the fact, claiming to have seen the shapes moving across the sky. Many professed to have seen the light formation unaided, from the ground. [redacted]

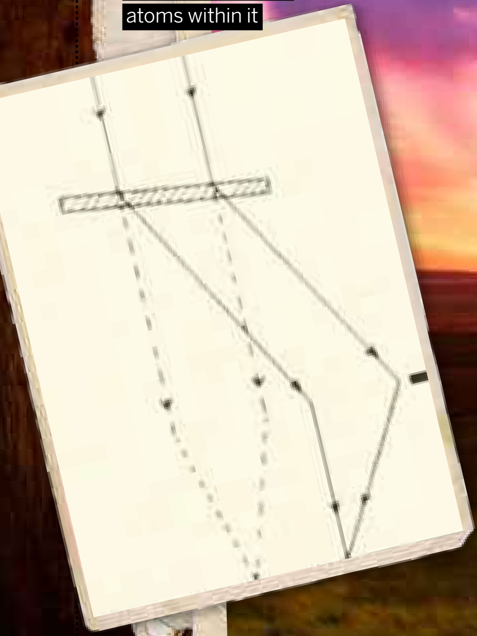
Patrick Marechal claimed to have taken a photograph of the UFO and released it to the media. Subsequent misinformation and confused retrospective eyewitness testimony has made a scientific analysis of the event impossible, although it is thought that some of the sightings were due to atmospheric interference known as Bragg scattering.

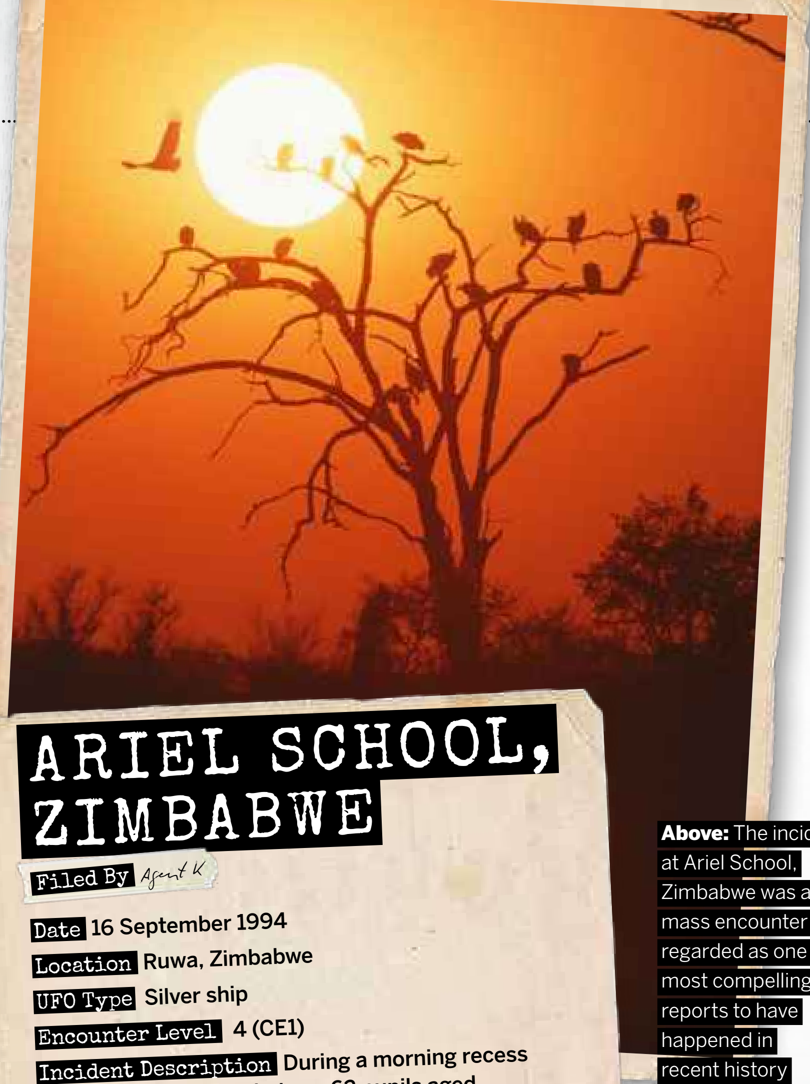
UPDATE In 2011, Marechal confirmed that his photograph was a hoax, made from a polystyrene triangle fitted with lightbulbs.

Below: Two Belgian Air Force F-16 pilots were sent out to find the unidentified object caught on radar but, despite circling the area for some time, saw nothing

Bottom: Many have subsequently claimed to have seen triangular UFOs after the initial sighting over Belgium and there are plenty of hoax photos to 'prove' it

Below: Bragg scattering can be replicated using electron microscopy. It occurs when two beams hit a crystalline solid in the air and are 'scattered' off two atoms within it





ARIEL SCHOOL, ZIMBABWE

Filed By Agent K

Date 16 September 1994

Location Ruwa, Zimbabwe

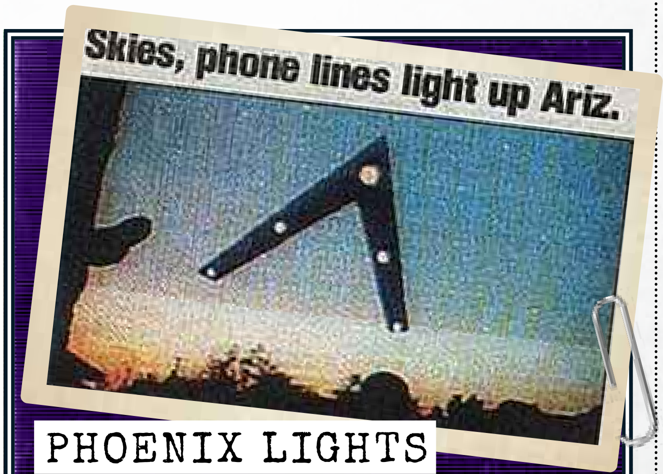
UFO Type Silver ship

Encounter Level 4 (CE1)

Incident Description During a morning recess at Ariel School in Zimbabwe, 62 pupils aged between six and 12 reported seeing alien craft land in a nearby field. The children observed multiple silver ships descend from the sky, before black-clad creatures exited the craft and attempted to communicate via telepathic means.

Above: The incident at Ariel School, Zimbabwe was a rare mass encounter and is regarded as one of the most compelling reports to have happened in recent history

Right: The Phoenix Lights dazzled multiple witnesses as they moved over Arizona in 1997



Skies, phone lines light up Ariz.

PHOENIX LIGHTS

Filed By Agent C

Date 13 March 1997

Location Phoenix, Arizona and Henderson, Nevada, USA

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description 19:55: witness in Henderson reported a V-shaped object moving southeast. Twenty minutes later, reports made of orange lights in the sky nearby. Reports followed of lights moving through sky in shape of inverted V. By 22:00, multiple reports received. Astronomer Mitch Stanley reported seeing planes flying in formation. Large numbers of witnesses in Phoenix reported rows of bright lights hovering in sky. Witnesses also report seeing lights slowly falling from the sky to the ground.

UPDATE In 2007, Arizona governor, Fife Symington III, confirmed his belief that craft was not one seen before on Earth.

LIGHTS ABOVE THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE

Filed By Agent C

Date 14 July 2001

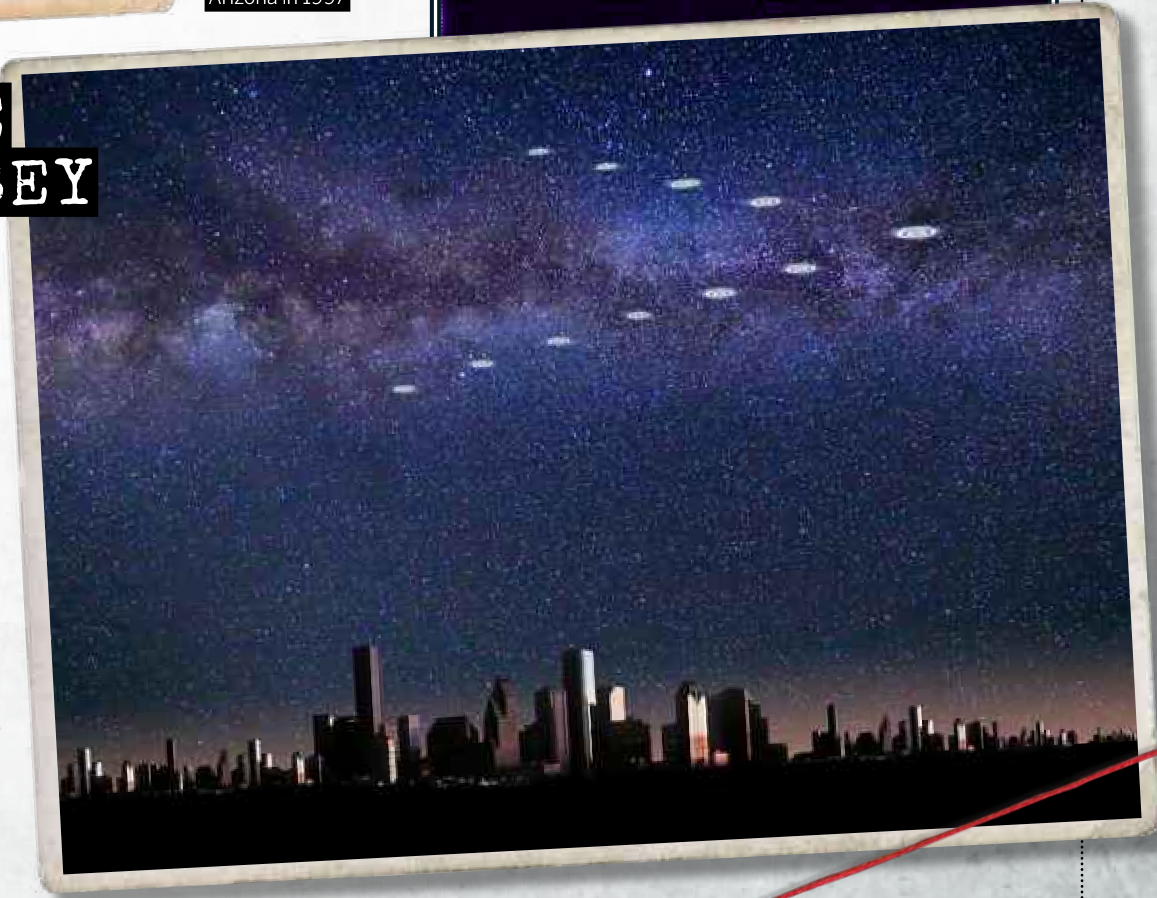
Location New Jersey, USA

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 1

Incident Description Multiple witnesses report disruption to traffic on New Jersey turnpike due to lights in sky. More than a dozen reports phoned in to police of orange lights in a V-formation, surrounded by further lights. Among eyewitnesses were retired and serving police officers. Lights moved slowly and silently over the Arthur Kill river. One by one, lights flickered and vanished. Witnesses report a sense of peace during encounter.

UPDATE Despite investigations, no definitive atmospheric, meteorological or physical explanation has been given.



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Left: Pilots were stunned when they sighted a UFO during flights off the coast of California

'TIC TAC' USS NIMITZ

Filed By Agent K

Date 14 November 2004

Location San Diego coast, California, USA

UFO Type Cigar

Encounter Level 3

Incident Description USS Nimitz radar identified aerial objects descending 24,384m (80,000ft) in one second. Commander David Fravor reported low-flying white object resembling a Tic Tac. Object was without marking, wings or exhaust. Craft mirrored observers' movements. Fravor observed for five minutes. When approached, object accelerated out of vision. [redacted]

UPDATE Fravor testified before US government national security subcommittee.

O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Filed By Agent C

Date 7 November 2006

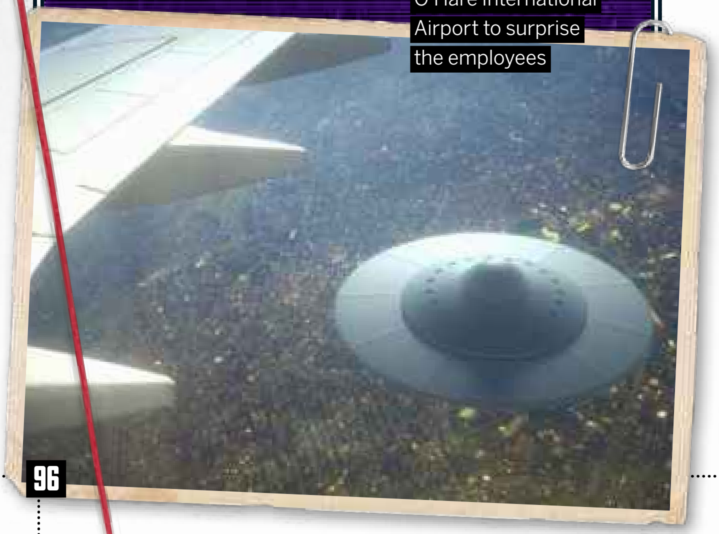
Location Chicago, Illinois, USA

UFO Type Flying saucer

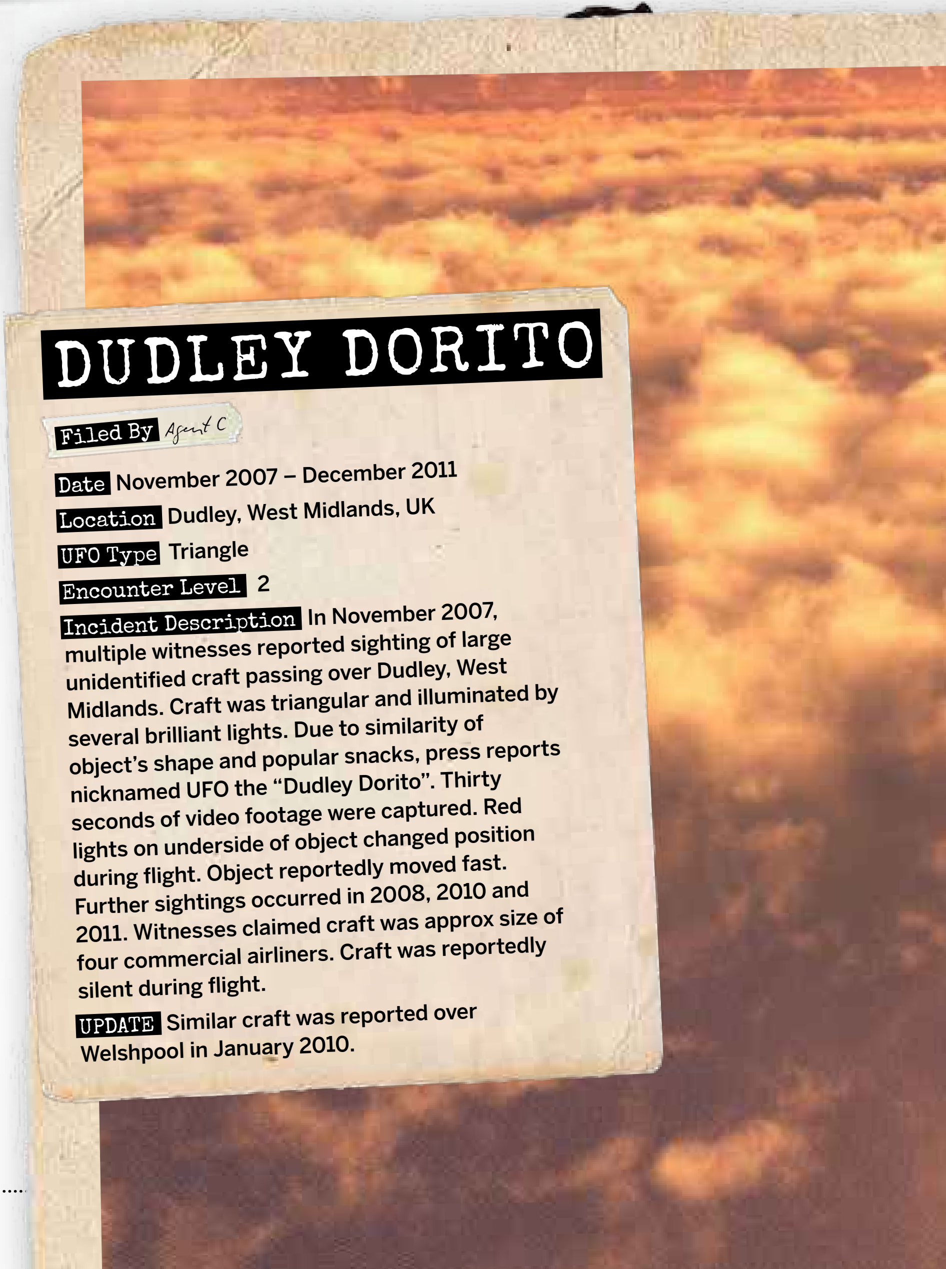
Encounter Level 2

Incident Description 16:15: Twelve employees at O'Hare International Airport witnessed metallic saucer hovering over Gate C-17. Object was dark grey, silent and up to 7.3m (24ft) in diameter. Witnesses observed for five minutes. Object ascended through clouds at speed. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) denied reports of sighting.

UPDATE FOI request revealed FAA had received a report.



Below: A flying saucer reportedly visited O'Hare International Airport to surprise the employees



DUDLEY DORITO

Filed By Agent C

Date November 2007 – December 2011

Location Dudley, West Midlands, UK

UFO Type Triangle

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description In November 2007, multiple witnesses reported sighting of large unidentified craft passing over Dudley, West Midlands. Craft was triangular and illuminated by several brilliant lights. Due to similarity of object's shape and popular snacks, press reports nicknamed UFO the "Dudley Dorito". Thirty seconds of video footage were captured. Red lights on underside of object changed position during flight. Object reportedly moved fast. Further sightings occurred in 2008, 2010 and 2011. Witnesses claimed craft was approx size of four commercial airliners. Craft was reportedly silent during flight.

UPDATE Similar craft was reported over Welshpool in January 2010.

STEPHENVILLE SIGHTINGS

Filed By Agent C

Date 8 January 2008

Location Stephenville, Texas, USA

UFO Type Light formation

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description Dozens of witnesses reported unidentified lights moving at speed through night sky above Highway 67. Lights moved in unison, formation approx 1.6km (1mi) long and 0.8km (0.5mi) wide. Accompanying reports of a large craft, illuminated by brilliant lights. Sightings were silent. Lights estimated at 4,800kph (3,000mph): US Air Force Reserve initially confirmed no airplanes were flying in area at time of sightings.

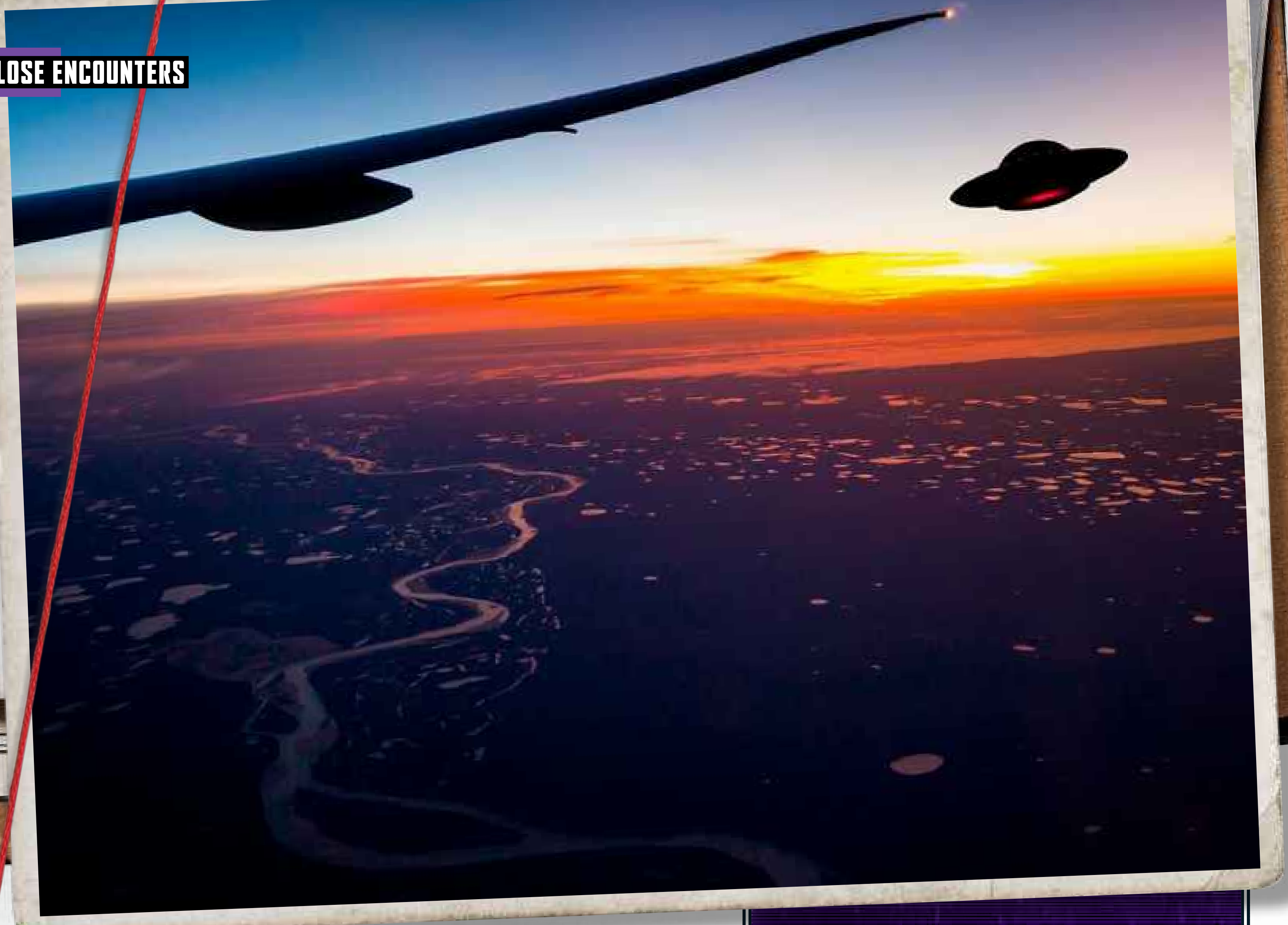
UPDATE USAF later claimed lights were F-16s. Witnesses do not accept official explanations.

> "Object reportedly moved fast. Further sightings occurred in 2008, 2010 and 2011. Witnesses claimed craft was approx size of four commercial airliners"

Above: Fast-moving lights soared over Stephenville in formation, stunning the witnesses

Below: The Dudley Dorito soared over the West Midlands

© Getty; Alamy



AGUADILLA AIRPORT INCIDENT

Filed By Agent C

Date 25 April 2013

Location Aguadilla, Puerto Rico

UFO Type Craft

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description Four-minute video captured by US Customs and Border Protection aircraft over Rafael Hernández Airport. Pilot and ATC confirmed sighting of object at 487-640m (1,600-2,100ft). [redacted]

Did not show on radar. Object descended into sea and split in two. Speed estimated at 193kph (120mph) in air/144kph (90mph) in water.

UPDATE USAF informed.

Above: A strange craft visited a Puerto Rico airport, before diving into the ocean

Right: In compelling footage, state-of-the-art fighter jet tech locked onto a UFO

> "Four-minute video captured by US Customs and Border Protection aircraft over Rafael Hernandez Airport. Pilot and ATC confirmed sighting of object"

EAST COAST GOFAST VIDEO

Filed By Agent C

Date January 2015

Location East Coast, USA

UFO Type Cigar

Encounter Level 2

Incident Description US Navy captured footage of object using advanced infrared targeting system. Tracking locked on object moving at high speed. Naval pilots from USS Roosevelt witnessed object and excitedly discuss on official videos. Object evaded further tracking.

UPDATE GOFAST is one of three unidentified aerial phenomena videos confirmed as genuine by the US government.

© Getty; Alamy

THE PENTAGON VIDEOS

Filed By Agent J

Date 2004/2015

Location Pacific Ocean, USA

UFO Type Cigar

Encounter Level 2

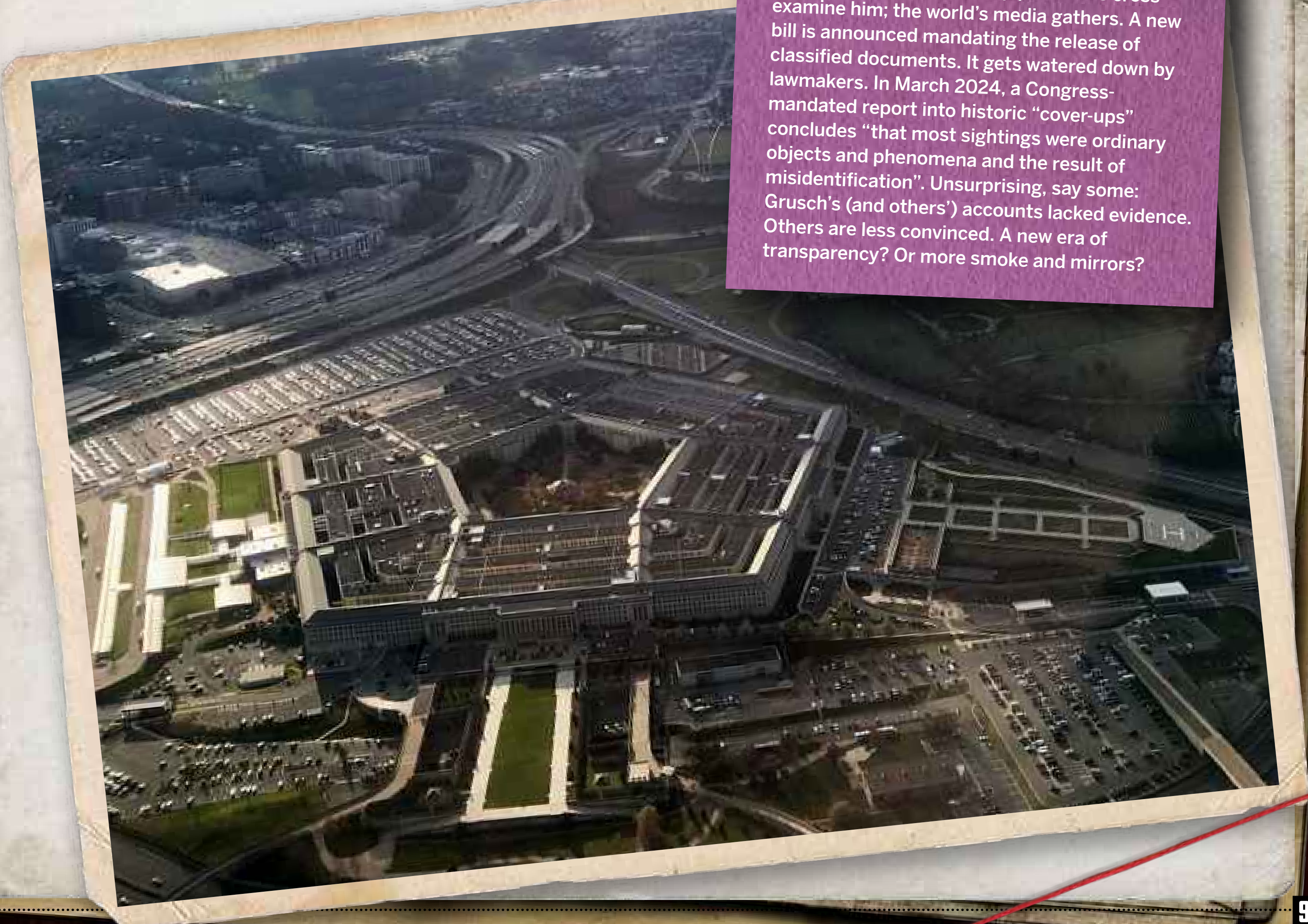
Incident Description Video footage captured of unexplained aerial phenomena moving at remarkable speeds. Three videos captured in 2004 and 2015 during US Air Force training flights. Previously leaked in 2007 and 2017. The 2004 video features two fighter pilots tracing a [redacted] rotating saucer-like object as it accelerates over the Pacific Ocean. Another video reveals a pilot's attempt to lock onto and trace a rapidly-moving UFO zipping above a body of water. Initially it evades the camera, such is its speed. The final clip shows a bright white light that seems to hover before darting out of view.

[redacted]

UPDATE Declassified as of April 2020 – videos released to general public to "clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real".

Above: Whistleblower David Grusch grabbed media headlines with his claims

Below: A report in March 2024 aimed to debunk and demystify – but has it raised more doubts?

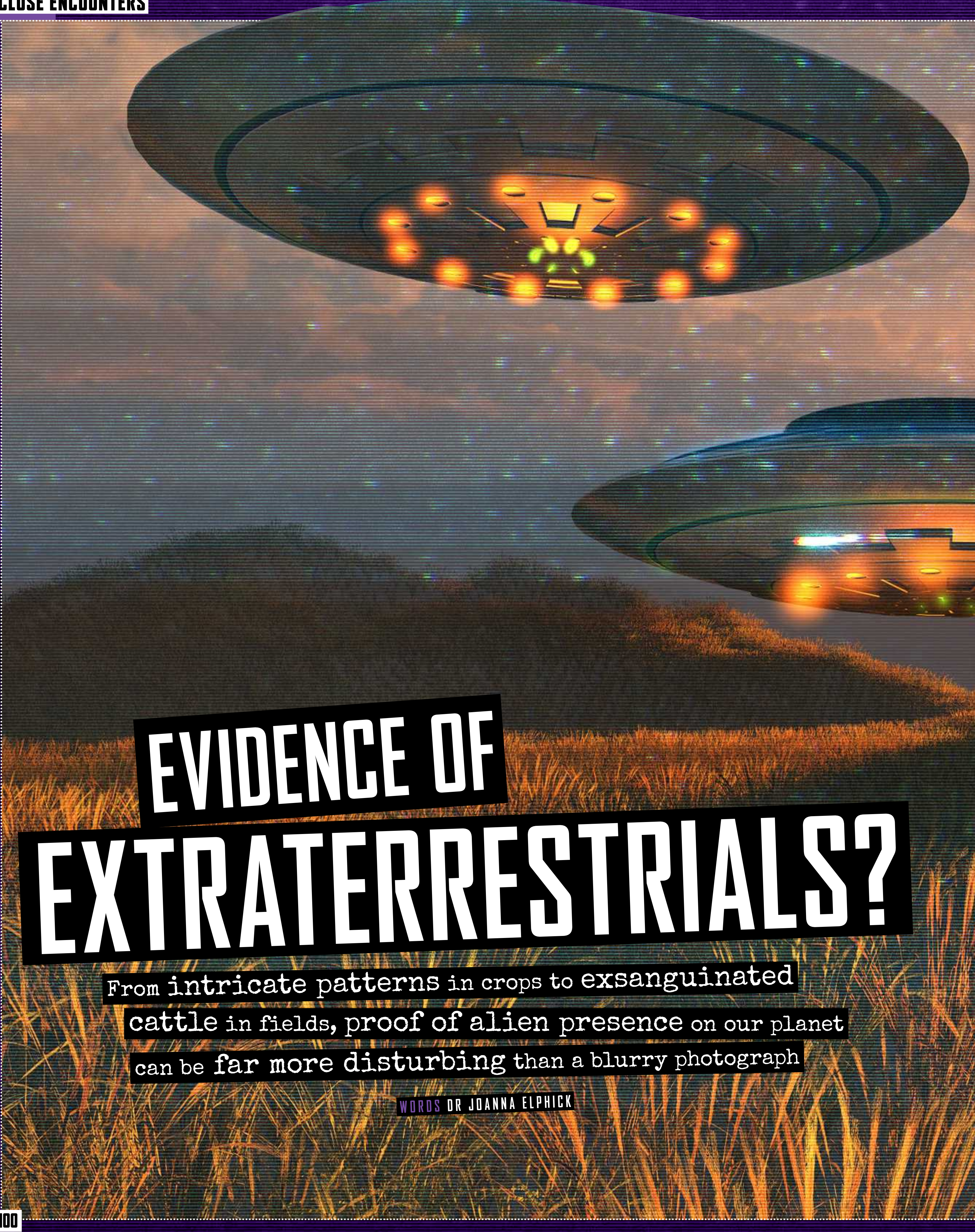


THE PENTAGON'S DEFINITIVE DENIAL (?)

Date July 2023

Location Washington, USA

David Grusch, US Air Force officer and former intelligence official, testifies, alongside others, under oath, that he believes that the US government (USG) has conducted a secretive UFO (or UAP) recovery programme and possesses "non-human" spacecraft along with their "dead pilots". US citizens have been harmed in cover-ups, he claims. Top politicians cross-examine him; the world's media gathers. A new bill is announced mandating the release of classified documents. It gets watered down by lawmakers. In March 2024, a Congress-mandated report into historic "cover-ups" concludes "that most sightings were ordinary objects and phenomena and the result of misidentification". Unsurprising, say some: Grusch's (and others') accounts lacked evidence. Others are less convinced. A new era of transparency? Or more smoke and mirrors?



EVIDENCE OF EXTRATERRESTRIALS?

From intricate patterns in crops to exsanguinated cattle in fields, proof of alien presence on our planet can be far more disturbing than a blurry photograph

WORDS DR JOANNA ELPHICK

If somebody invites you on a UFO-hunting expedition, you would be forgiven for grabbing your binoculars and looking up at the night sky. But not all evidence of alien life forms come from shiny, moving objects whizzing across the firmament, and many shocking paranormal phenomena have occurred in conjunction with a UFO sighting. Could these extraordinary occurrences be further proof of intelligence beyond the stars?

© Getty

RISE OF THE CEREOLOLOGISTS

Pulsating lights and strange hovering objects have been witnessed for many centuries but in the 1980s, an apparently new phenomenon coincided with such extraterrestrial sightings; the mysterious crop circles. Although the intricate patterns have been found across the entire world, from the golden wheat fields of Australia and California to the rice paddies of China and Indonesia, the world capital hotspot is undeniably the United Kingdom, or Wiltshire, to be more precise. It was here among the sacred sites of Avebury and Stonehenge that the crop circles were first reported upon and, by the mid-1980s, the general public had gone 'crop circle crazy'.

Stunning circles began appearing all across south-west England, each more complex and beautiful than the last. However, it was the many eyewitness accounts of flying objects and strange, darting lights that often preceded the arrival of a new circle that led many to believe the flattened cereal patterns were nothing less than UFO landing nests. Such claims were met with fascination by some and utter ridicule by others. Clearly, some are manufactured hoaxes. An unusual pattern, discovered in a field on Wiltshire's Hackpen Hill, was later confirmed to be the logo of a local tavern, undermining the excitement of the many crop circle enthusiasts, or 'Cropsies', that had arrived to gather evidence of an alien encounter. Similarly, a seven-acre circle in the shape of the Star Wars Rebel Alliance emblem was also – unsurprisingly – revealed as a hoax.

But others are not so easy to dismiss as artistic pranks. In 1985, five glowing lights were spotted in a quincunx formation, hovering above a farmer's field. The following day, the very same pattern was discovered in the wheat directly beneath the UFO sighting. A coincidence seems unlikely. So, what are these magical patterns that appear overnight and are somehow crafted under the cover of darkness?

Some clearly are hoaxes. After two men, Doug Bower and Dave Chorley, came forward and admitted to creating most of the Wiltshire circles, many assumed that all circle phenomena were faked and the newspapers even gave instructions on how to make your own 'UFO nest'.

Others have propounded the Plasma Vortex Theory, a meteorological explanation whereby a typical wind vortex becomes ionised and forms an area of electrified air. It has been said that the resulting electromagnetic field could potentially cause the crops to flatten in various

Right: Crop circles have generated lots of theories over whether UFOs are involved in their creation

Bottom right: A slew of crop circles appeared in fields in the 1980s

Below: Not all crop circles are genuine paranormal phenomena and many examples are created today as a form of folk art, not to hoodwink, but to delight

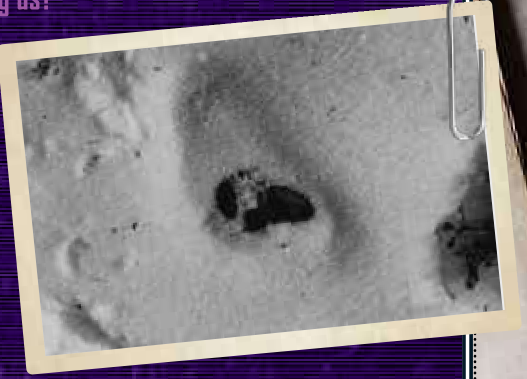
patterns and shapes. This odd explanation is arguably more far-fetched than saying an alien airship landed in the field!

The close proximity of Earth's energy-rich ley lines to clusters of crop circles have led some to believe that there is a vital connection between the two. Could the land's organic radiation create such patterns? Twelve ley lines converge on Stonehenge and Silbury Hill, where some of the most intricate circles have appeared. Many academics have attempted to debunk crop circles as human-made artforms and New Age mumbo jumbo, claiming that any 'proof' is nothing more than pseudoscience, but still the extraterrestrial link persists.

The notion that the circles of flattened cereal are UFO 'nests' seems highly unlikely, since the undercarriage of each spaceship would have to be uniquely patterned in extremely complex

THE CRYPTID LINK

Could alien creatures be walking among us?



+ Cryptozoology is the study of hidden animals, those creatures as yet unproven to exist. Jackalope, Mongolian death worm, Jersey Devil and the Loch Ness monster all come under this umbrella but is it possible that some cryptid sightings are in fact extraterrestrial encounters? Two cryptids in particular have been linked to UFO phenomena.

Some call him Bigfoot, others call him Sasquatch, but now researchers are suggesting we should be calling him E.T thanks to multiple sightings of orange orbs in the areas associated with Bigfoot encounters. It has been theorised that these fast-moving lights are in fact multi-dimensional portals, something NASA has acknowledged could exist, and that Bigfoot uses them to appear and disappear at will. It would certainly explain the tracks that can be followed in the mud, only to stop abruptly. Previously, researchers thought that the hominid jumped up into the trees to escape, but now some believe he simply leaps through a glowing portal into a new dimension.

If these glowing UFOs are indeed magnetic portals, then it stands to reason that Bigfoot and other elusive cryptids such as the Yeti, who seem to appear and then simply vanish in the blink of an eye, could be creatures not of this Earth.

Rather than terrorising the locals, the people of Fresno have welcomed the Nightcrawler as their very own adorable alien. This white, wafer-thin humanoid creature has been caught on video and CCTV footage walking in a particularly odd manner ,with backward-bending knees. It has no arms and a small indistinguishable head that gives it the appearance of a pair of glowing trousers going for a leisurely stroll. Since it doesn't resemble any creature on this planet, cryptozoologists are of the opinion that the Nightcrawler is nothing less than an extraterrestrial going out for a late night walk.

> "Some call him Bigfoot, others call him Sasquatch, but now researchers are suggesting we should be calling him E.T thanks to multiple sightings"

Above: Yeti footprints? Charles Stonor thought so when he took the picture in 1954

Right: The Abominable Snowman, also known as a Yeti, has been linked to UFO sightings. Could magnetic portals explain the tracks in the snow that abruptly stop?

© Getty; Alamy; Shutterstock

formations, but this doesn't mean there is no alien connection and that all crop circles are hoaxes and cynical jiggery-pokery.

For decades NASA has been attempting to reach out and make contact with other life forms within our universe. Since it is unlikely that they will speak English, scientists have sent out clear radio signals in order to let other worlds know of our existence. The signals are purposely artificial so that they cannot be mistaken for natural sequences and comprise of prime numbers and binary codes that, when deciphered, create a human shape. They say that mathematics is the only universal language and this may very well be the case.

Benoit Mandelbrot, a Polish-born scientist, developed a shape on an IBM computer as a representation of the concept of infinity to be used in chaos mathematics. In 1993, the exact shape appeared in a cornfield in England. In 2008, a retired astrophysicist noticed that a circle was a coded image of the first ten digits of Pi. Meanwhile in 2009, a 91-metre (300-foot) design appeared in a rapeseed field in Wiltshire. Scientists were amazed to discover that the extraordinarily complex image represented a mathematical formula known as Euler's Identity. Is it too far-fetched to imagine that the crop circles are alien life form responses to NASA's radio signal sequences, using mathematical imagery to reach out to us?

Right: Sceptics have argued that large jellyfish such as the aptly named Moon jellyfish could be mistaken for an underwater UFO, especially when they give off an eerie glow

Below: Bizarre mutilations have spread beyond the confines of America and cattle farms

THE CATTLE CORPSE CLUES

In 1967, the body of a three-year-old mare named Lady was discovered by its owner in Colorado. The flesh had been ripped backwards off the animal's neck and various internal organs had been removed. Yet despite the violent attack, not a single drop of blood had been spilt and the surrounding area was devoid of any animal track marks, including Lady's own hoofprints. It was a grotesque and freakish incident that had never been seen before but sadly, it was not to be the last. Within a short space of time, a spate of bizarre cattle mutilations began occurring across America, much to the horror of the local cattle ranchers.

Each case appeared to follow a similar pattern. The cattle were discovered with their sexual organs removed, the skin was often stripped from their faces, and the eyes and tongues were sometimes removed. However, despite the obvious maiming, the scenes were blood-free. In some cases, witnesses confirmed that they had noticed bushes near to the corpses were burnt, while others claimed the surrounding flora had been crushed flat.

Autopsies revealed that the precise incisions had been made using extraordinary heat and were most likely achieved using a high-tech laser. This information, coupled with a flurry of UFO sightings in the area, caused a wave of panic. Could this depraved behaviour have been carried out by extraterrestrials? In 1974, a number of farmers in Nebraska reported seeing a series of unidentified flying objects hovering above their land, only to discover the bloodless corpses of a number of cows the following day.

> "Autopsies revealed that the precise incisions had been made using extraordinary heat and were most likely achieved using a high-tech laser"

The government were quick to dispel any talk of aliens and the FBI were called in to find the true cause. Dubbed 'Operation Animal Mutilation', the investigators concluded that the majority of cases could be explained as simple predator attacks, while the lack of blood was due to insects. Many ranchers were unconvinced, particularly since they noted that blowflies and carrion maggots appeared to avoid these particular mutilated corpses.

Other sceptical members of the public suggested that the culprits were most likely Satanic cult members looking for animal sacrifices but this also failed to explain the absence of blood normally found at such scenes of carnage. The government officials clearly wanted to avoid a mass panic but as further snippets of information were leaked to the press, the notion of alien intervention began to pick up traction.

Today, unexplained animal deaths can be found all around the world and are no longer limited to cattle. Domesticated cats and dogs – along with wild animals such as moose, bison and rabbits – have all been discovered partially exsanguinated with all manner of organs missing. The incisions are invariably precise and clinical. While the surrounding area is usually lacking in animal tracks, some witnesses have noticed strange markings in the earth, made by something resembling large suction cups. Others have seen deep holes that look as if a metal pole has been plunged into the soil.

As with so many UFO-related phenomena, proof of extraterrestrial intervention regarding animal mutilations is scarce to say the least, but such events have not been confined to the land. Other clues have been known to wash up on the shoreline of Orkney, Scotland. Over 30

decapitated seals were discovered, their bodies untouched. In all other respects they had been perfectly healthy. Scottish pathologists claimed that the incisions had been performed with an incredibly sharp implement. There were no signs of teeth marks to suggest a whale attack. A flurry of UFO sightings had been reported the night before the seals were discovered. Perhaps ufologists should start looking for answers under the sea rather than in the skies.

IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE WAVES!

Everybody has heard of UFOs but USOs, or Unidentified Submerged Objects, are rarely discussed in the media. These unknown objects have been spotted by fishermen and naval officers all around the world, and rise from the water, glide through the waves or dive back into the deep. While some sightings are clearly 'crafts', other USOs include creatures that cannot be identified or explained and some sightings combine both USO and UFO activities.

In 2019, US Navy pilots witnessed unidentified aerial phenomena above them. As they watched in wonder at the strange craft in the sky, their sonar equipment was busy capturing further extraordinary events occurring beneath them. Pilots became aware of extreme turbulence bubbling around the ship. The event was reported to the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program, who had to acknowledge there was a chance the UFOs had come up from beneath the ship rather than from space.

Of course, no one is exactly sure what these nebulous sightings are. Some believe the dark shapes moving in the water are nothing more than rarely spotted sea creatures such as the megamouth shark, giant squid, whale shark, or the recently discovered humpback anglerfish. Others believe as yet unidentified sea monsters of gargantuan proportions, such as the mythical kraken, make up a percentage of USOs.

But perhaps the scariest suggestion is that USOs are simply UFOs that live beneath our seas rather than beyond the stars. The strange phenomena is not a recent discovery. During the 1950s, naval officers based at the station in San Francisco regularly reported strange objects going in and out of the water. In 1957, a Japanese fishing boat spotted two ten-metre (33-foot) long shiny objects coming down from the sky and diving into the water, causing massive waves. Sonar operators have also picked up strange objects on their equipment. During an anti-submarine warfare exercise off the coast of Puerto Rico, an operator recorded a craft travelling at over 150 knots!

Whether these USOs are mysterious sea creatures from our own planet, unknown cryptids as yet to be identified, or alien craft hiding beneath our vast seas, one thing is for certain. UFO sightings consist of far more awe-inspiring phenomena than simply inexplicable lights in the sky.

Left: Some are of the opinion that extraterrestrial life is below the sea, not just beyond the stars

© Getty; Alamy

TERROR FROM THE SKIES

ALIEN ABDUCTIONS

© Adobe Stock (AI Generator)

Is there anybody out there?

The persistent question of whether or not humans are alone in the universe has plagued us for millennia

WORDS KATE CHERRELL

Ancient civilisations wrestled with fears and legends of vengeful beings from the skies, while medieval painters conveyed their fears of celestial invaders through woodcuts and ink. Our fear of being alone is only worsened by the thought that other beings, more powerful and developed than ourselves, exist in a world just outside our reach. The speculative terror of aliens existing transforms when we consider that these beings may have already made contact, visited Earth and want to abduct and study us for their own ends.

Humans have always wrestled with the possibility that we may not be alone in the universe, whether through a belief in a higher power, unseen forces or intelligence from an alternate world. Interest, and particularly fear of UFOs and alien contact, gained traction in a fraught period of Western political and military history. During the early years of the Cold War, rising fears of governmental conspiracies and coverups fanned the flames of UFO-mania, where an increased interest in science fiction and a growing concern of unfamiliar, foreign aircraft led to a notable spike in fears of 'alien' civilisations, both terrestrial and extraterrestrial. UFOs were not simply a comic novelty or niche interest, but a genuine concern and another nameless, unpredictable and powerful threat from the skies.

While most high-profile claims of alien abductions occurred in the 1960s, reports of humans interacting with possible extraterrestrial lifeforms were recorded as far back as the 1890s. Prior to the proliferation of the term 'alien abduction', these instances of alien/human contact were often framed as attempted kidnappings, and were later named 'paleo-abductions' by writer and UFO researcher, Jerome Clark.

THE FIRST ALIEN ABDUCTION

The Victorian era was the age of progress, but also of unwelcome visitors

+ The first accepted report of an attempted alien abduction was reported in the USA. On 27 November 1896, Californian resident Colonel H G Shaw claimed that he and a friend had been accosted by three strange creatures who attempted to abduct them. While the creatures' plans were thwarted due to their curiously low weight, the Colonel and his companion gave a description of their appearance and to the local *Stockton Daily Mail*, who reported a sensational account of these 'three strange visitors who possibly came from the planet Mars'.

Rather than appearing like 'little green men', these creatures were humanoid, measuring roughly 2.1-m (7-ft) tall, weighing less than 28g (an ounce) and covered in a fine hair-like material that was soft to the touch. While the visitors left in their enormous airship without ever achieving an understandable means of communication with the men, the Colonel theorised that they were "inhabitants of Mars, who have been sent to the Earth for the purposes of securing one of its inhabitants".

> "Rather than appearing as 'little green men', these creatures were humanoid, covered in a fine hair-like material that was soft to the touch"

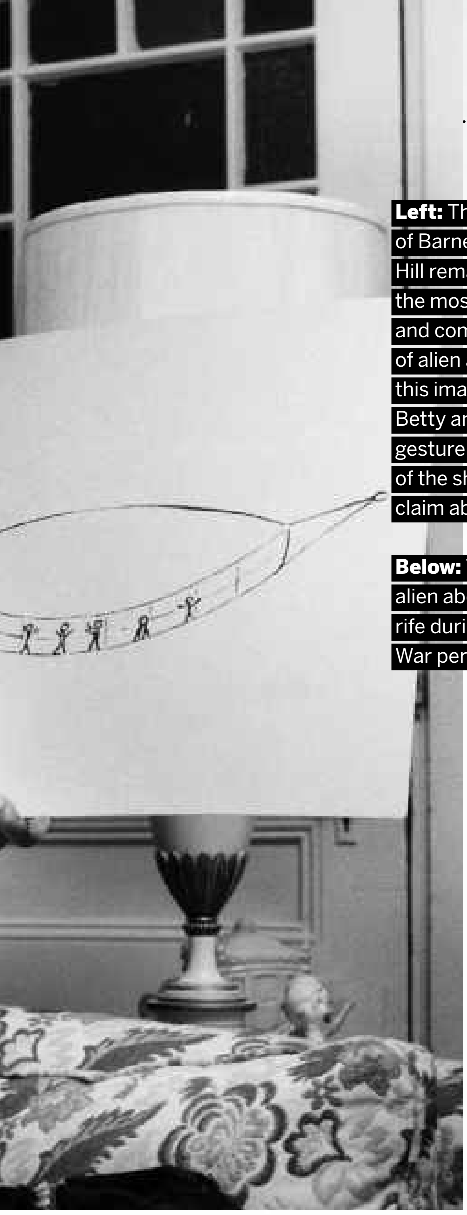
Left: The case of Colonel H G Shaw in Victorian San Francisco is regarded as the first publicly recorded claim of alien abduction and a close encounter of the third kind

SNATCHERS FROM OUTER SPACE

As mentioned, during the period of the Cold War, reports of UFO sightings and abductions skyrocketed, invariably aided by the popularity of science fiction literature and the increased air traffic across much of the USA. The nature of military secrets entered public debate and quickly joined with the growing field of ufology, whereby aliens and visitors from space were seen by many as a national threat as real as Soviet surveillance and communism.

Worldwide news stories, such as the UFO crash at Roswell, fanned the flames of public interest, leading to the summer of 1947 to be nicknamed the 'Summer of the Flying Saucer'. By the 1950s, UFO-mania was in full swing, yet this interest in UFO-spotting quickly turned to fear. In a 1953 article, writer Leroy Thorpe was the first to publicly pose the question; 'Are the Flying Saucers Kidnapping Humans?', suggesting that visitors from another world may be visiting Earth to procure human specimens for study or torture. Also in 1953, alien-obsessed electrical engineers, Karl Hunrath and Wilbur Wilkinson, disappeared after renting a plane to visit a suspected UFO landing site close to Los Angeles. While their journey was supposed to be a short one, within state lines, their plane was never found, leading some to believe that they had been abducted by the same aliens they had so desperately sought.

The first internationally-publicised case of an alien abduction was that of Barney and Betty Hill, an American couple who claimed to have been abducted by aliens on a stretch of deserted New Hampshire highway in 1961. Driving back home from a vacation in Montreal, they were approaching Lancaster in New Hampshire when the couple noticed a bright light in the sky that seemed to be following them. This strange light moved erratically and changed in size, and soon the couple's curiosity caused them to stop the car and take a closer look with binoculars. It was at this point that Betty noted a strangely-shaped craft with flashing lights moving slowly across the Moon. Their journey progressed a little further before the craft quickly descended towards the couple, causing them to immediately halt in the middle of the road. As the craft hovered above them, Barney reported seeing 11 strange humanoid figures in black uniforms at the UFO's windows, one of whom communicated telepathically, telling Barney to "stay where you are and keep looking". The craft appeared to fly away without incident and the couple were able to continue



Left: The abduction of Barney and Betty Hill remains one of the most fascinating and compelling cases of alien abduction. In this image from 1966, Betty and Barney gesture to a likeness of the ship that they claim abducted them

Below: The fear of alien abduction was rife during the Cold War period

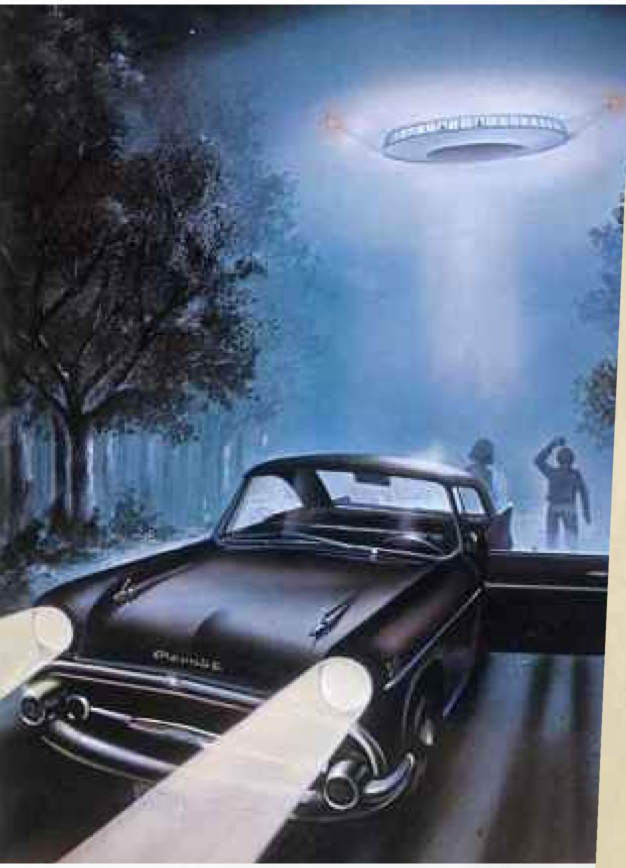
their journey home, albeit understandably shaken from the incident.

However, upon arriving at their house, they both felt decidedly unsettled. The time frame of their journey didn't make sense, having arrived home four hours later than expected. They also both felt rather dirty and began to experience a string of unexpected and unexplained compulsions. Their watches had stopped working, Barney's shoes and binocular strap were damaged, Betty's clothes were torn and small, circular marks were found on the back of their car. The couple tried to gather their memories and timelines but were thwarted by a recurring buzzing sound that immediately scattered their thoughts. It was only following a series of dreams and hypnosis sessions that the extent of the Hills' trauma was expressed.

As is found in the stories of many abductees, Betty experienced a series of vivid and detailed dreams following her experience, the contents of which related to their encounter. She wrote down that, at a roadblock, she and Barney were led into the forest by two small, grey men in blue uniforms. While Barney followed close behind, he was in an unresponsive trance state, but stood close as the figures returned to their craft and departed.

While the pair were apprehensive to try hypnosis, the Hills' sessions would become the basis of many arguments for the validity of abductees' stories. Hypnosis as a means to 'recover' suppressed memories has long been associated with abductees, but was a largely unknown treatment at the time of the Hills' story. When placed under hypnosis, Barney recounted a detailed story of compulsion and abduction, one that their own minds had tried to erase. After running back to the car, Barney tried to speed away from the spacecraft hovering above them, but soon felt a strange and strong compulsion to pull away from the road and enter the nearby woods. Here, he came upon six humanoid figures, three of whom approached him and 'mesmerised' him with their vision; the image of these eyes was the most troubling of all to Barney, who repeatedly cried out in fear of their memory. These figures had not spoken to him through any audible language, but through telepathy, or as Barney went on to state, 'thought-transference.'

Betty's stories were mostly consistent with her husband's, and stated that they had encountered strange humanoids who placed them into a trance and brought them to their technologically-advanced craft. Once inside, Betty and Barney were placed into a medical examining facility, where samples of their hair, nails and skin were taken. Most terrifying of all, a needle measuring between ten-15-centimetres (4-6-inches) long was plunged through Betty's navel, believed to be a brutal attempt at a pregnancy test. Throughout the



Below: Many abductees have turned to hypnosis in an attempt to recover suppressed memories and explain their 'missing time'

© Alamy; Getty

ordeal, the Hills' examination was overseen by a creature they simply called 'The Leader', with whom Betty later conversed. Although she was unable to understand the origin of the aliens, or the location of their ship, she would later draw a star map while under hypnosis, which has hung in the face of ufologists like a great unanswered riddle ever since.

While the Hills were not the first people to claim an abduction experience or alien encounter, their story became the basis for how much of society and the media discuss UFOs to this day. Aliens with grey skin, medical examinations and missing time all became familiar characteristics in popular culture and science fiction.

In fact, there are many common threads between the stories of alien abductees, most of which are traumatic and invasive in nature.

The phenomena of 'missing time' in abductions is commonplace, and often accounts for the need of hypnosis later down the line. It is believed that many abductees experience gaps in memory and time accountability for the duration of their abduction, with time periods ranging from a few minutes, to several days. These gaps in memory are believed to be the result of memory erasure, whereby extraterrestrials abduct an individual, conduct their desired tests and experiments, and return the abductee with no memory of the incident. However, through broken memories, dreams or physical effects, many abductees claimed to have recovered memories, in part or in full, via several means of regression or hypnotism. Why and how extraterrestrials seem to possess the ability to remove memories is a subject of continued debate.

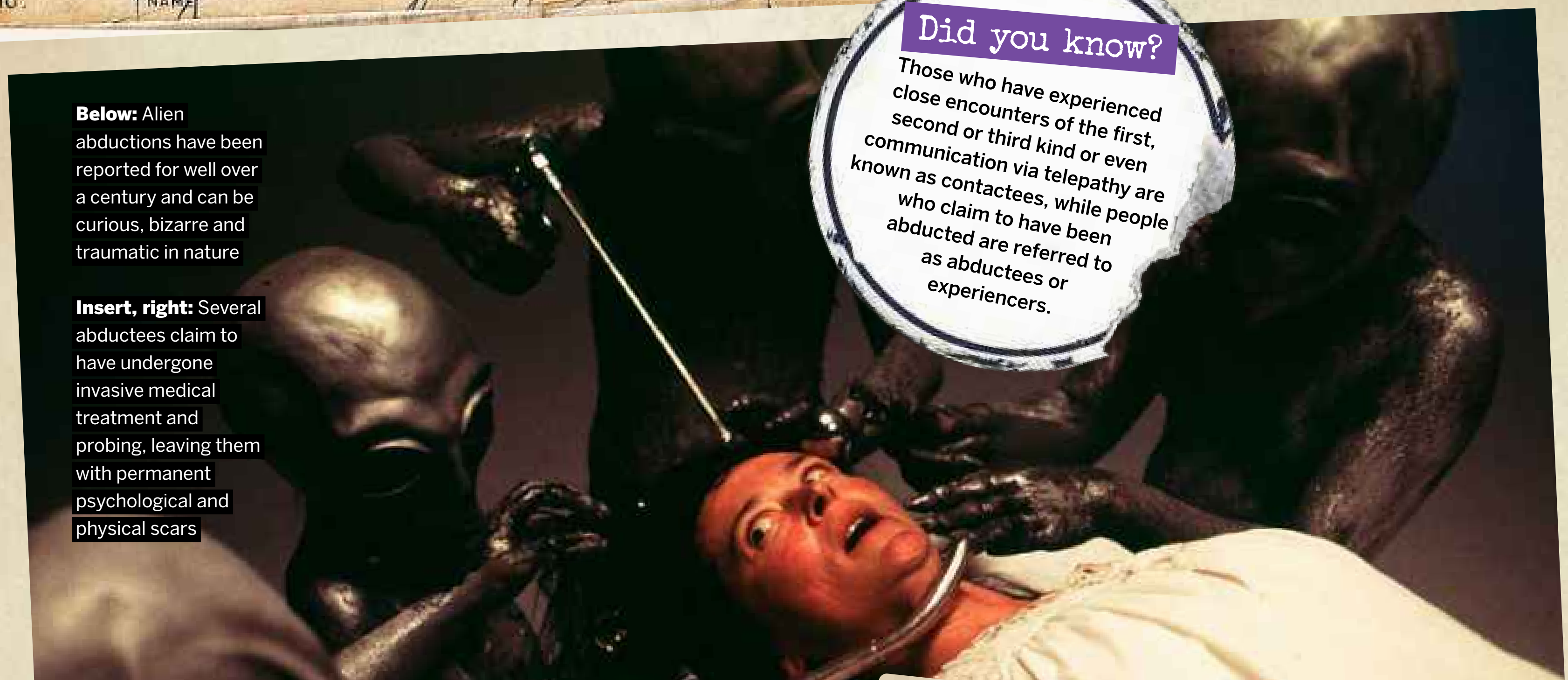
ALIEN AUTOPSIES

Similarly, medical study and physical examination are common claims by many abductees. The purpose of abduction by alien craft is often regarded as a predominantly scientific quest, as though to procure zoological specimens for study. These medical procedures have often been described as violent and invasive, including probing of orifices, the cutting and puncturing of skin and the sampling of various physical matter. Much like the horrors experienced by laboratory animals across the centuries, abductees often recount terrifying stories and present mysterious scars and conditions as proof of their experience. Considering the violent nature of many of these procedures, primarily conducted without any pain relief, the intentions of these alien races is brought into question; if they treat Earth's inhabitants so poorly, what are their plans for humans?

Implants are a common claim with abductees, whereby extraterrestrials insert objects into their person. Most implants claimed by abductees are small, metal objects that are believed to be for tracking purposes and are regarded as evidence of a wider development in alien nanotechnology. Some medical doctors, such as Dr Roger Leir, profess to have removed several alien implants from the bodies of patients and have studied them in detail. Other implants have been recorded as being more

Did you know?

Those who have experienced close encounters of the first, second or third kind or even communication via telepathy are known as contactees, while people who claim to have been abducted are referred to as abductees or experiencers.



Below: Alien abductions have been reported for well over a century and can be curious, bizarre and traumatic in nature

Insert, right: Several abductees claim to have undergone invasive medical treatment and probing, leaving them with permanent psychological and physical scars substantial in size, but made from materials unknown to humans, and often imbuing the abductee with supernatural abilities.

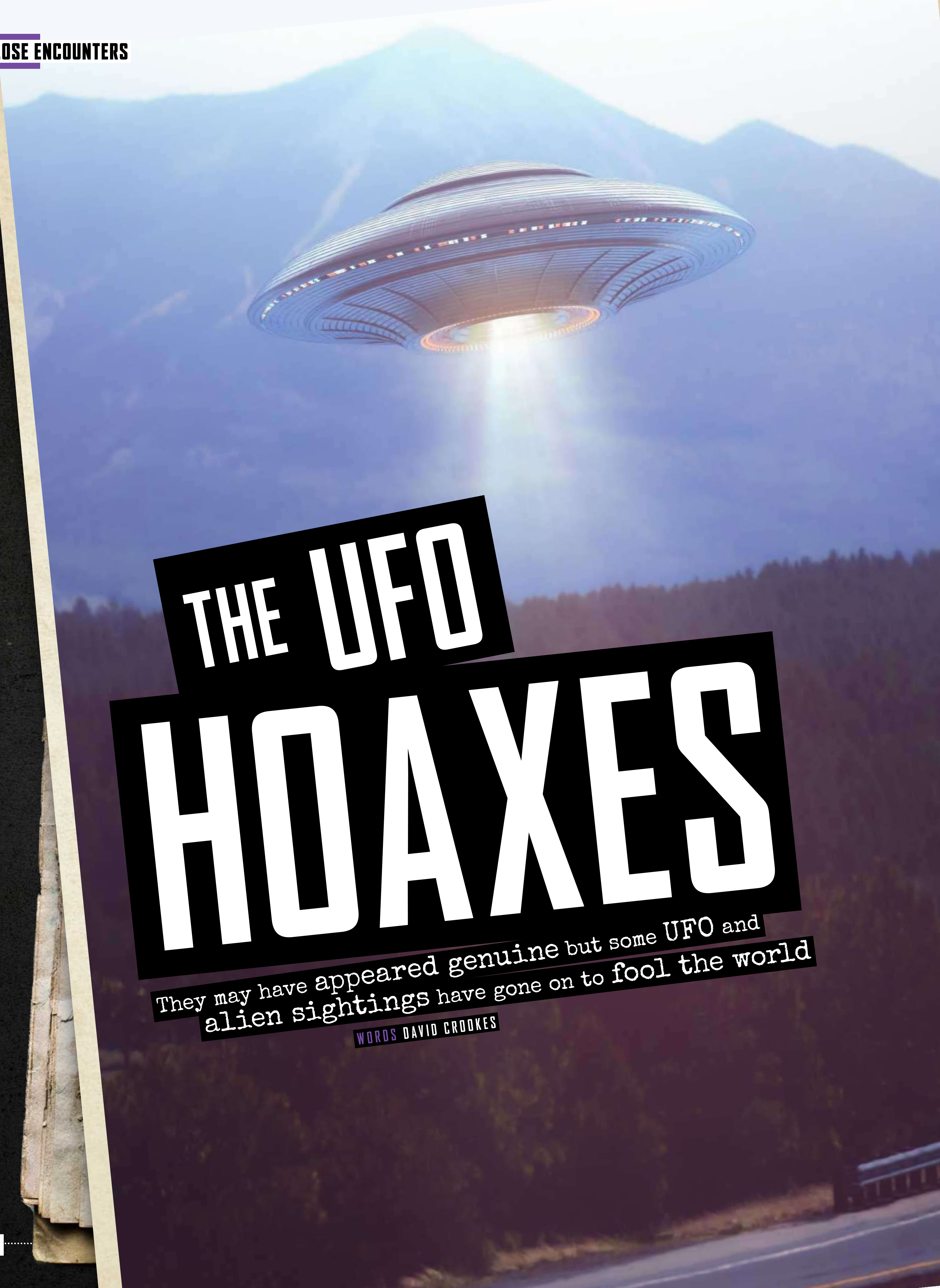
Usually included in discussions of intimate probing are claims of alien-human breeding experiments, whereby the purpose of the abduction is to study human fertilisation and pregnancy, and also to experiment with the possibility of cross-species conception. By the 1990s, the trope of sexual violence at the hands of an alien was entrenched in popular culture, both in television and literature, where the image of the 'alien anal probe' was parodied across the world. However, the fear of a systematic extraterrestrial breeding experiment remains, with a 2009 headline reporting that an Oxford academic knew of the cultivation of 'alien-human hybrids' in an attempt to survive climate change.

While alien conception may be framed as a simple scientific experiment on the part of the extraterrestrial, many abductees have claimed to have sexual relations with aliens, even taking them as their lovers. Elizabeth Klarer was a South African woman who claimed to have maintained contact with alien beings between 1954 and 1963, and would take an alien being known as 'Akon' as her lover. Not only did they physically consummate their love, but they conceived a child, 'Ayling', which was born on Akon's home planet of Meton. As recently as 2022, individuals have made headlines, claiming that they are in love with alien beings and are 'waiting for them to propose', and in 2013, a British politician claimed to meet his alien lover four times a year for intercourse, as their ship orbited the Earth.

As extreme and outlandish as many abductee claims may be, these individuals were often alone in their experiences and socially isolated as a result of their story. Those wanting to meet others who had endured similar experiences would meet alongside UFO enthusiasts at the Giant Rock Spacecraft Convention, which ran from 1953 to 1978. The convention provided merchandise, meetings and the opportunity to 'UFO spot' for themselves. The convention was the brainchild of enthusiast and abductee George Van Tassel, who lived in the Mojave Desert in a subterranean home, equipped with an airship, restaurant and research facility. It was here that he founded his convention, which attracted countless international visitors until his death in 1978.

It is believed that many abductees experience gaps in memory and time accountability for the duration of their abduction, with time periods ranging from a few minutes, to several days

© Alamy; Getty



THE UFO HOAXES

They may have appeared genuine but some UFO and alien sightings have gone on to fool the world

WORDS DAVID CROOKES

It's said that pictures can paint a thousand words but, in UFO culture, they can also potentially hoodwink thousands, if not millions, of people. Take the example of Billy Meier's photographs from the mid-1970s, which strongly appear to show UFOs flying above the countryside in Switzerland. While there is no evidence of photographic tampering and Meier insists they are real (taken to prove he had been in contact with aliens since he was five), scientists and most ufologists have labelled them as fakes. And they're not the only images to have been dismissed.

In May 1950, Paul and Evelyn Trent took photos near McMinnville, Oregon, purporting to show disc-shaped UFOs. The couple died continuing to insist they were real but, while there are believers who say the images are proof of the existence of flying saucers, subsequent investigations not only suggest holes in the story but the strong possibility the 'UFOs' may have actually been models hanging by wires.

Similarly, an alleged incident on Ilkley Moor, UK, on 1 December 1987 saw a retired police officer take a photo of an apparent alien, later claiming it had been part of a crew who had abducted him on a morning walk. In this case, sceptics reckon the subject was either a person or a piece of cardboard but, because the image was blurry, no-one can be sure either way.

This is a general problem with UFO photography, however. Despite advanced technology, images of UFOs and aliens seldom turn out to be sharp and that means ascertaining the truth can be difficult. To be entirely sure a photo is a hoax, investigators often have to rely on someone retracting their claim but even if they do, it's not always clear-cut. In 1962, a photographer in Sheffield, UK, came forward with images of a group of UFOs flying over the city. It wasn't until 1972 that he confessed they were actually flying saucers painted on glass. Case closed, you'd think, until he changed his mind in the 1990s and convincingly claimed they were real again.

> "Despite advanced technology, images of UFOs and aliens seldom turn out to be sharp and that means ascertaining the truth can be difficult"

INVESTIGATING CLAIMS

But what of those cases where photos are absent? How do investigators figure if they are real or not? Usually this is worked out by picking up on each presented 'fact' and deciding how plausible it is. This often involves assessing the source of a claim for reliability but that can sometimes be very tricky.

In 1884, the *Nebraska State Journal*'s managing editor, J D Calhoun, reported the crash of a mysterious "blazing aerolite" on 6 June in Dundy County. It was said to have been witnessed by named cowboys who discovered lots of metal machinery strewn across the ground. Having already suffered injuries due to the intense heat at the site – one complained of having a blistered face – the cowboys backed away but returned with local residents the following day, finding a long cylindrical tube up to 3.6 metres (12 feet) in diameter.

By the time the report was printed, a couple of days later, the aerolite is said to have completely dissolved, leaving no trace and rendering further investigation pointless. The suggestion was that it was a spacecraft of alien origin but doubts about the story soon began to creep in. The fact that the story was written by

Left: Billy Meier has a large collection of UFO images said to have been taken over Switzerland but sceptics and many ufologists say they're a hoax

© Getty; Alamy

the managing editor of a respected daily newspaper lent it legitimacy, however. In fact, the story continued to be believed by many until 1927, when the publication admitted it was a hoax in an article titled, 'A Celestial Visitor Revisited: A Nebraska Newspaper Hoax from 1884'. But then, newspaper hoaxes weren't uncommon: 1884 was also the year a British Columbia newspaper, the *Daily Colonist*, said a gorilla had been caught near Yale.

Right: Images taken in Sheffield (left) and Minnesota (right) supposedly showing alien spacecraft

ESTABLISHING A HOAX

In such instances, newspapers were looking to entice readers to spend their money by providing riveting tales to discuss over breakfast or at work. But hoaxes exist for a wide number of reasons. They can be devised as a practical joke, to spread false information about a cause close to someone's heart, or simply for attention. And hoaxes, once aired, can be perpetuated by people doubling down or by others embellishing them.

When experienced private pilot Kenneth Arnold said he saw a string of nine incredibly fast-moving shiny UFOs zooming past Mount Rainer, USA, on 24 June 1947 while flying his light aeroplane, his story became national news. The media reported the presence of "flying saucers" in the sky, each one about 30 metres (100 feet) across, and Arnold dearly wanted an explanation for his observations.

To help him get to the bottom of the sightings, Arnold was approached by Raymond A Palmer, editor of *Amazing Stories* magazine. Palmer had caught wind of claims by Harold Dahl who, while captain of a boat patrolling the east bay of Maury Island in the US state of Washington, was also claiming to have seen saucer-like aircraft. Arnold was asked to interview Dahl, who said the UFOs had spilt white metal. This had not only killed a dog on board the boat but injured a worker's arm. The story was backed up by Dahl's superior officer Fred Crisman, who said he'd recovered debris from the craft.

The story deepened. Men in black had apparently approached Dahl and told him to keep quiet. But the more the investigations continued and widened, the more obvious it became that the whole thing had been made up. The white metal debris seen by Arnold didn't match Dahl's description and the FBI, which investigated with the potential aim of charging Dahl and Crisman for making false claims (the case was dropped), concluded the sightings were a hoax, potentially designed for profit.

The 1967 British flying saucer hoax also involved the sighting of six disc-like spacecraft and it sparked a major panic. The UFOs were not only said to have appeared in a straight line across southern England, but had actually landed. They were being spotted in fields by members of the public and, upon closer inspection, they were making an alarming electronic humming noise.

As each saucer was found, the police and military flew into action, cordoning them off for further investigation. RAF helicopters were used to help take some of them away and they were weighed and assessed for potential explosives by bomb disposal units. Although each of the alleged spacecraft were actually quite small – just 54-inches long, 30-inches wide and 20-inches deep – there was a real concern that they could do serious harm.

This feeling intensified when one of the saucers was drilled. As the hole was made, foul-smelling slime spilled out, contaminating police officers. But while one flying saucer ended up in the hands of the chief designer of the guided weapons division of the British Aircraft Corporation, the panic came to an end when a 'spacecraft' was X-rayed and found to be powered by batteries that could be found in most British grocery stores. The slime, it was later discovered, was a mixture of flour and water that had fermented.

The hoax was created by Christopher Southall and Roger Palmer, apprentices from the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, both as a joke and a way of raising money for the college's Rag Week. They admitted the wheeze the same day and revealed they had created the convincing flying saucers out of fibreglass covered with metal. The MoD reckoned it was a very successful practical joke and took no further action.

A HOAX TO PROVE HOAXES

The same couldn't be said for the Morristown UFO hoax, however. The perpetrators of this one – Joe Rudy and Chris Russo – ended up having their day in court where they received a fine and community service. They'd been involved in attaching flare lights to helium balloons over five nights between 5 January and 17 February 2009. To those on the ground, it looked as if there were floating red lights in the sky above Morris County, New Jersey. They were seized upon as evidence of UFOs.

Rudy and Russo helped to make such a connection. After sending the lights skywards, they took photos and recorded videos, which ended up being widely distributed online and

> "They can be devised as a practical joke, to spread false information about a cause close to someone's heart or simply for attention"

Left: When six of these 'flying saucers' were discovered across the south of England, the emergency services and the army were mightily alarmed picked up by news networks. Other residents also made reports, with some suggesting what they saw could not possibly be made by humans. When Rudy and Russo eventually owned up to the prank – on 1 April, no less – they revealed their motivation.

They had, they said, decided to release the balloons to expose ufology as a pseudoscience. “We had always had a strong interest in why people were so easily fooled by such irrational superstitions as psychic ability, spiritual mediums, alien abductions, and the like,” they wrote. It hasn’t put an end to UFO sighting reports, however, nor of hoaxes. In 2011, two Russian men claimed to have come across a bizarre corpse in eastern Siberia only to reveal they’d actually made it themselves out of chicken skin stuffed with breadcrumbs. And in 2015 in Uttar Pradesh, India, a resident shared a photo of a large UFO that looked similar to the one in the movie *Independence Day*. The camera, it seems, really can lie.

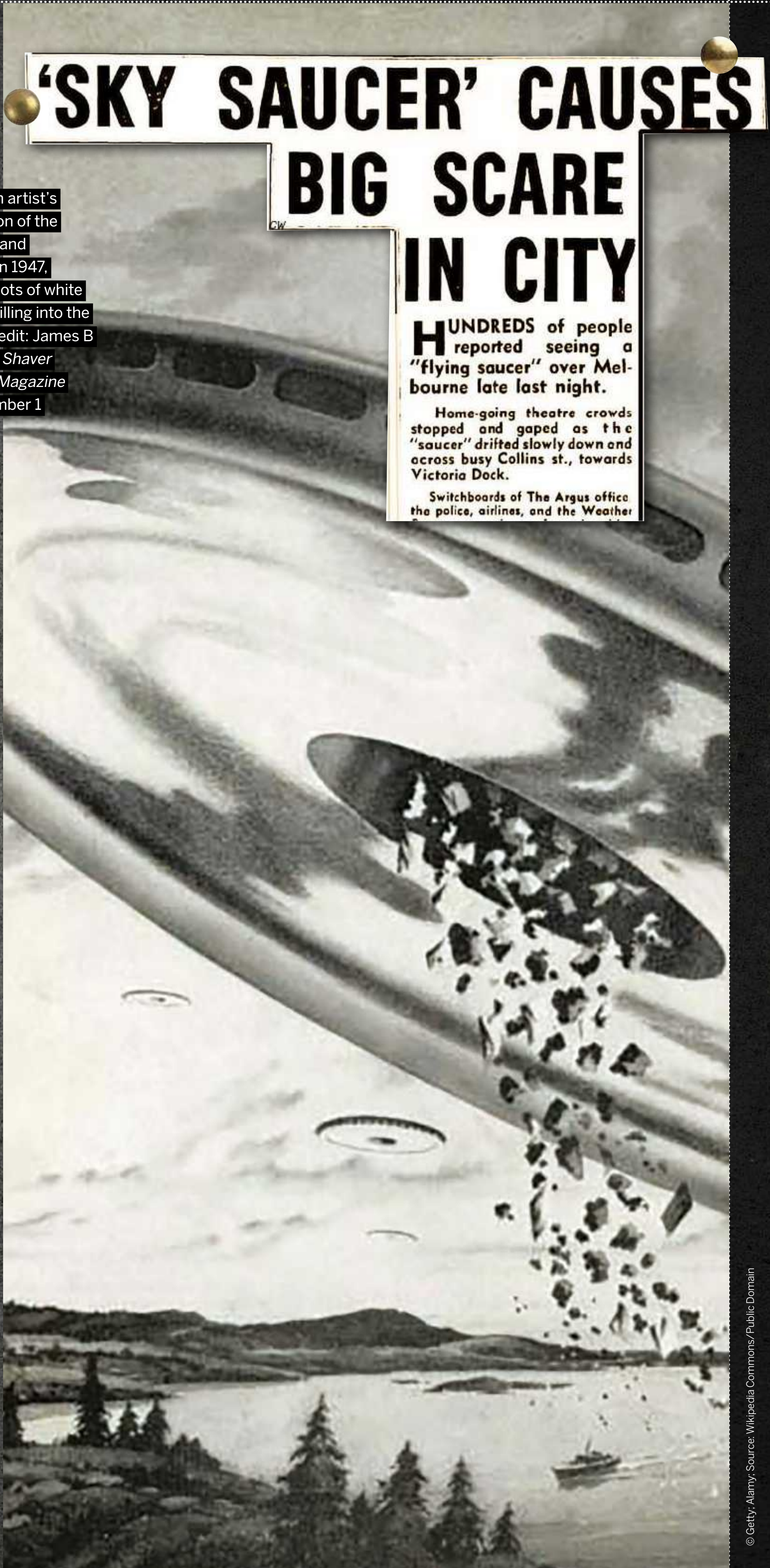
THE ALIEN AUTOPSY

The king of all fakes in the UFO world

+ One of the most high-profile hoaxes emerged in 1995 when the British entrepreneur, Ray Santilli, released a film called *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction*. It was widely broadcast and highly convincing, showing an alleged alien autopsy being carried out in the wake of the 1947 Roswell incident. But despite attracting millions of viewers, the footage was soon revealed to be totally fictitious – *The X-Files* poked fun at it in 1996 and it was called out in the documentary, *The World’s Greatest Hoaxes: Secrets Finally Revealed* in 1998.

Santilli himself admitted in 2006 that the footage had been filmed on an inexpensive set using corpses made of plaster, filled with offal and raspberry jam. Yet he maintained it was actually based on truth; that the original alien autopsy footage that he’d seen and intended to buy had become damaged, leaving him with nothing to base his documentary special around.

Right: An artist’s impression of the Maury Island incident in 1947, showing lots of white debris spilling into the water. Credit: James B Settles – *Shaver Mystery Magazine* Vol 2 Number 1



‘SKY SAUCER’ CAUSES BIG SCARE IN CITY

HUNDREDS of people reported seeing a "flying saucer" over Melbourne late last night.

Home-going theatre crowds stopped and gaped as the "saucer" drifted slowly down and across busy Collins st., towards Victoria Dock.

Switchboards of The Argus office the police, airlines, and the Weather

© Getty; Alamy; Source: Wikipedia Commons/Public Domain

WE WANT TO BELIEVE

The enduring appeal and influence of UFOs on terrestrial culture

118...Will salvation come from space?
122...They're already here
128...The war of the worlds

WE WANT TO BELIEVE

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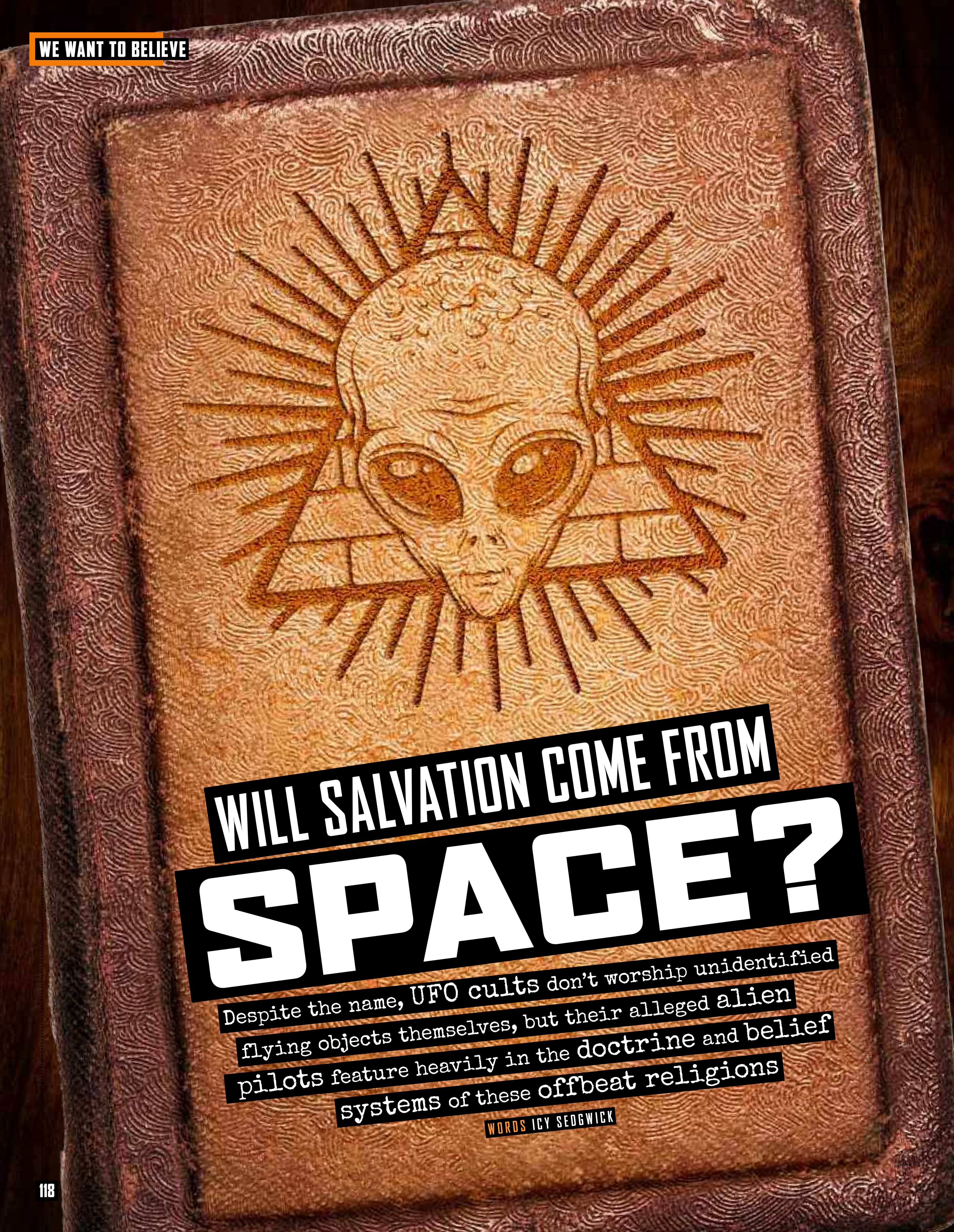


WILL SALVATION COME FROM SPACE?

Despite the name, UFO cults don't worship unidentified flying objects themselves, but their alleged alien pilots feature heavily in the doctrine and belief systems of these offbeat religions

WORDS ICY SEDGWICK

The religions based around UFOs and aliens can range from the benign, seeing extraterrestrials as a benevolent force who wish to help humanity, to the apocalyptic, seeing aliens as 'saving' followers from an impending disaster that will wipe out our species. Think of the Christian idea of the Rapture, but with UFOs instead of angels, porting 'chosen souls' to another world. It's not just a 20th-century belief. Swedish theologian and philosopher, Emanuel Swedenborg, claimed he'd channelled spirits from other worlds as long ago as 1758. Yet the religions involving UFOs tend to see their foundation in the mid-20th century.

> "Think of the Christian idea of the Rapture, but with UFOs instead of angels"

Such beliefs aren't restricted to specific religions. Some strands of modern New Age spirituality believe in a form of alien contact with the idea of 'Starseeds'. In this belief, Earth itself sent out a distress call across the cosmos, and souls from other star systems reincarnated on Earth to save the planet. Starseeds believe they lived past lives in star systems surrounding stars such as Sirius and Vega, and that they are on Earth to help solve environmental disaster, bring positivity to humanity, and achieve other lofty goals.

Yet the beliefs of UFO religions can lead people into dark places. The association of UFO cults with mass suicide and murder reveals how easily nefarious individuals can pervert the concept for negative reasons. Likewise, the appearance of aliens can take the foundational texts of religions created in the 20th century into the realm of science fiction. It's hard to take them seriously until former members come forward to discuss the financial or psychological abuse that is present within the religion. With that in mind, let us take a look at some famous UFO cults.

Above: Followers believed they were destined to be beamed to heaven

HEAVEN'S GATE

The cult suicide prompted by a comet

+ Bonnie Nettles and Marshall Applewhite founded Heaven's Gate in 1974. Nettles claimed extraterrestrials predicted the meeting, and their group attracted a following throughout the mid-1970s. While they're known as Heaven's Gate now, they only used the name for their final years. Previously, they were called Total Overcomers Anonymous and Human Individual Metamorphosis. They also held an unusual distinction in being one of the first American cults to recruit members over the internet.

Their main belief system combined Christian theology and aliens. Applewhite claimed to be the Second Coming of Christ, and that God was an alien. One theory involved God abducting Mary to impregnate her with Jesus. Followers believed humans were less evolved than extraterrestrials, who would return at Armageddon to destroy Earth. They would take the faithful with them, those who were evolved enough to ascend to the next level. Originally, followers believed they would ascend to heaven in an alien spaceship, 'beamed aboard' in a sci-fi version of the Rapture, but when Nettles died from cancer in 1985, Applewhite had to alter the group's belief system. In the updated belief, bodies were the soul's container, and upon death, their consciousness would transfer into a new body. They still left Earth when they died, but only their soul went to the spaceship.

In March 1997, the approach of Comet Hale-Bopp triggered the group's mass ritual suicide. According to their website, they believed the arrival of Hale-Bopp concluded their time on Earth, and they were ready to graduate to the next level of evolution. False rumours persisted about a spaceship hidden in the comet's tail, and the group felt it was the spaceship intended to take them to their new intergalactic home. All 39 active members died, discovered in a San Diego house by police.

Right: Hale-Bopp was used as a sign that the members' time on Earth was at an end

© Getty; Alamy

ORDER OF THE SOLAR TEMPLE

The cult that claimed links with the Knights Templar

+ Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro founded this controversial group in 1984 in Geneva. Both founders were previously involved in occult societies, with Mambro involved with the Rosicrucians, and Jouret being part of the Renewed Order of the Temple. This latter group had a strange ancestry dating back to 1805. Following the French Revolution, Bernard-Raymond Fabré-Palaprat tried to recreate the Knights Templar, although it split into factions, including the Renewed Order.

The Order of the Solar Temple (OTS) shared a belief that the world would face an apocalypse in the mid-1990s. Their message of environmental disasters was not entirely without precedent, and in the earliest days of the cult, the founders sought members who could survive such an apocalypse. Over time, their goals changed, with Jouret telling followers he was a Templar Knight in a past life.

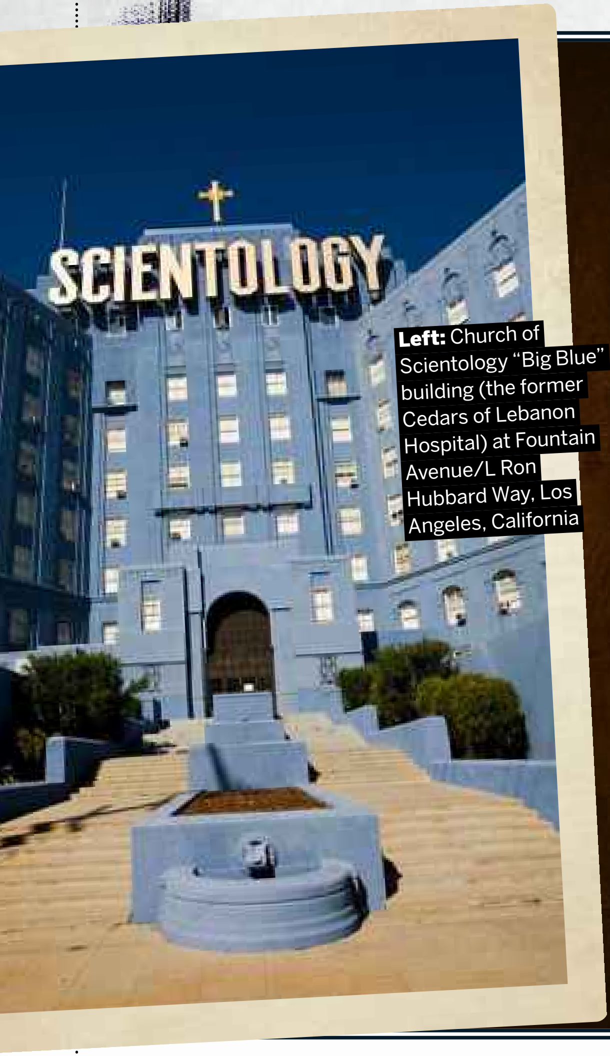
While the cult's spiritual aims involved arranging the Second Coming of Christ, space-based content emerged in Jouret's teachings. He claimed that in the event of the impending environmental apocalypse, members would leave their bodies and take a 'Death Voyage' to a planet orbiting Sirius, the Dog Star, where they would be reunited. Only group members could do this, leaving the rest of humanity to perish on Earth. The 'Death Voyage' was a euphemism for suicide.

With the group rocked by a series of scandals, their activities took a macabre turn in 1994. Fifty-three members died on 4-5 October in Canada and Switzerland, after fires were reported. While events were staged to look like a mass suicide, later autopsies showed the deceased were drugged before being shot or suffocated. Jouret and Mambro were among the dead. Sixteen more members died in 1995, followed by five in 1997. The actions of the OTS led to a tightening of regulations of cults in France.

Above: Joseph Di Mambro pictured in 1993 on CCTV from Brisbane airport as released by the AFP

Source: Wikipedia Commons © Public Domain

> "The Order of the Solar Temple shared a belief that the world would face an apocalypse in the mid-1990s"



Left: Church of Scientology "Big Blue" building (the former Cedars of Lebanon Hospital) at Fountain Avenue/L Ron Hubbard Way, Los Angeles, California

SCIENTOLOGY

The 'Religion' with celebrity members

+ Perhaps one of the more notorious religions involving aliens, sci-fi writer L Ron Hubbard founded Scientology in 1954. While he described his original concept, Dianetics, as a science, he recast it as a religion: Scientology.

According to Dianetics, the mind is divided into the analytic and reactive minds; the conscious and subconscious, in a Freudian model. During stressful or traumatic experiences, the pain is imprinted on the reactive mind as an 'engram'. Dianetics 'purged' these engrams through a process called 'auditing'. While psychiatric organisations questioned these methods, they're not the part of Scientology that interests us here.

While their higher 'teachings' are only available to the more advanced Scientologists (after paying a huge amount of money), the alien part of Scientology has circulated unofficially on the internet for some time after being leaked by former members. According to these ideas, millions of years ago, an ancient civilisation was brought to Earth and then destroyed by an evil ruler named Xenu. The spirits of these aliens became energetic parasites, known as 'body thetans', that cause trauma in humans. Scientologists purge these alien parasites through auditing, although, somewhat confusingly, people are also said to have an implant that will kill anyone who tries to solve the memory of this past trauma. It seems only those who use Scientology technology are able to safely overcome this trauma and thus neutralise the implant.

Unsurprisingly, Scientology has proven to be controversial, and both Germany and France keep the organisation under close scrutiny. Former members have criticised it as being a scam, while church officials were convicted of fraud in France. Even though it counts high-profile celebrities like Tom Cruise, John Travolta and Priscilla Presley as members, it is often considered an expensive hoax.

Right: Celebrities such as Tom Cruise give Scientology a glamorous sheen

UNARIUS ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

The intergalactic self-help method

+ Ernest and Ruth Norman founded the Unarius Academy of Science in 1954 in Los Angeles, and they still have a centre in El Cajon, California. UNARIUS stands for UNniversal Articulate Interdimensional Understanding of Science, which gives us a clue as to what the group believes.

Ernest ran the group between 1954 and 1971, writing books about 'interdimensional science', having apparently channelled the material from aliens. Ruth prophesied that 33 spaceships would arrive in 2001 to save Earth. When this didn't happen, some Unarians claimed this arrival would only occur when humans were ready for the aliens to bring the technology that would save the planet. Charles Spiegel ran the group between 1993 and 1999.

It's difficult to categorise Unarians, since they reject classification as a religion, insisting their work belongs in the realm of science. They believe in an immortal soul, the presence of a creative intelligence, karma, repeated reincarnation, and the existence of intelligent life elsewhere in space.

Yet some of their beliefs certainly feel more like science fiction, such as ancient civilisations who could travel through space previously inhabiting the solar system. Some students believe they lived past lives on planets in Orion's constellation, or in both Lemuria and Atlantis, the hotly-debated ancient civilisations. Other beliefs are more 'New Age' in tone, such as healing past-life trauma as a form of personal development, and the idea that everything is made up of energy, which vibrates on particular frequencies. These correlate with popular ideas such as the Law of Attraction, although more mainstream concepts don't usually have extraterrestrial add-ons, such as believing in channelling entities from space.

The Academy is listed as a not-for-profit educational foundation, and offers a variety of self-study courses for would-be followers, particularly when it comes to accessing their past lives to heal trauma in a form of reincarnation therapy.

Above: Charles Spiegel in the group's distinctive 1969 Cadillac

Below: One of the ante rooms at the El Cajon location

© Getty; Alamy

THEY'RE ALREADY HERE!

UFOs and aliens have invaded mainstream popular culture through fictional media

WORDS ALICE PATTILLO

Our fascination with 'fos didn't stop with the flying saucer frenzy of the forties and fifties (see page 38) – UFOs have become synonymous with aliens and both extraterrestrials and their unique space transportation vehicles have become a mainstay of popular culture, filtered into our collective consciousness through science fiction literature, film and television. They have infiltrated every genre, from comedy and kids' shows to horror movies. Whether or not you believe in their existence, there's no doubt aliens have already invaded.

© Getty; Alamy

Left: *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* leads the way when it comes to benevolent aliens

Below: *Flight of the Navigator* continued the theme of aliens being much nicer than humans

FRIEND OR FOE?

During the 1950s, films like *The Flying Saucer* (1950), *The War of the Worlds* (1953), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), and *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (1959), helped to create the universal flying saucer design that we have all become familiar with. Its relatively simple shape made it cheap and easy to recreate as a prop in horror B-movies. The majority of the films of the 1950s featured UFOs piloted by malevolent Martians who were dead set on a hostile takeover of planet Earth and reiterated typical alien invasion narratives that had been a staple of extraterrestrial fiction since the 1800s, and had been popularised by HG Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. However, this isn't the only way we view aliens. The idea of another whole race from another planet might seem frightening, but it's hard not to create a fictional war without seeing it through the human experience and considering that invading species might not have total annihilation as their aim. Aliens are one of the most versatile paranormal beings in fiction; unlike monsters such as vampires or werewolves, who are inherently set on destruction (as is their very nature), or angels and modern fairies who are associated with purity and goodness, aliens can be anything – just like humans – which is perhaps why they have such an enduring appeal and are able to reinvent themselves as both humanity's worst nightmare and as their greatest heroes. As far back as the 1950s, writers have seen this potential in fictional extraterrestrials: that they can represent otherness and help people to consider real-world issues in a safe space. In 1951's *The Day The Earth Stood Still,* Klaatu arrives as an alien who has good intentions at heart – to prevent nuclear destruction – but is instead met with violence thanks to his otherness. He's not the only friendly alien to infiltrate popular culture, either. The most famous helpful non-invader alien was first introduced in 1938. Superman has become perhaps the most well-known extraterrestrial of all time, and is Earth's ultimate saviour, rather than its destroyer.

NEIGHBOURLY PLANET HOPPERS

While hostile invaders and monstrous Martians were still the most popular stories involving extraterrestrials and UFOs, during the 1960s our attitude towards aliens expanded even further. The Space Age began in 1957 and kept outer space at the forefront of public interest, while New Age movements introduced otherworldly entities, Eastern philosophies and alternative spirituality to mainstream audiences. Numerous new conspiracy theories and religious beliefs emerged, along with more peaceful ideas of our intergalactic neighbours as friendly folks simply knocking on our door for a cup of sugar. As a result, more and more fictional alien benevolent species emerged in film and on TV: entities further evolved than ourselves who act as angelic or godly guides and seek to help us or those who need help from us, such as refugees escaping planetary wars and seeking solace or simply beings who have wound up stranded and far from home.

In 1963, *My Favorite Martian* began airing on American television showing a comedic, softer side to aliens, and an alien who was more afraid of us than we were of him.

Debuting in 1966, *Star Trek* has become one of the most successful science fiction media franchises of all time. With the series taking place in space, there is no battle for the Earth and it instead plays out like a Western – a spaceship crew exploring the "new frontier" and coming into contact with various alien species, many of which are friendly and become allies, with a few more militant and aggressive races to add suspense and drama. Its nuanced approach to aliens has made it a cult classic and an important mainstay of popular culture that has spawned a whole franchise.

In 1968, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, penned by science fiction writer Arthur C Clarke and film director Stanley Kubrick, hit cinemas. Based on

THE LEGACY OF THE KELLY-HOPKINSVILLE ENCOUNTER

How the strange story of a gun fight with goblin-like aliens inspired Hollywood

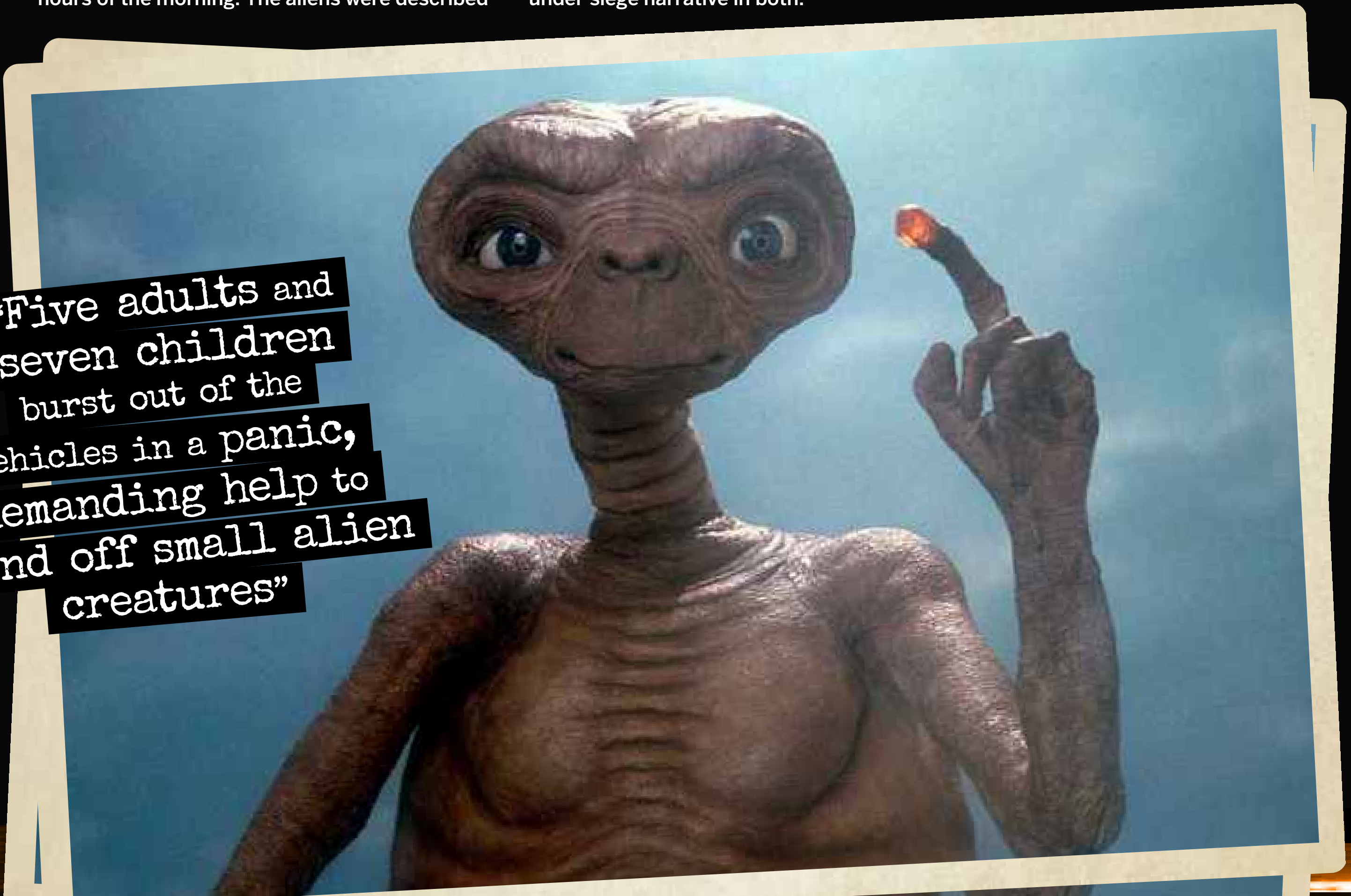
+ It's a real 'chicken or the egg' scenario: does the media fuel UFO sightings or do UFO sightings fuel the media? While pop culture media has had a massive influence on flying saucer fads, real life UFO encounters have equally had a major impact on popular culture.

On 21 August 1955, at approximately 11pm in the evening two cars pulled up at Hopkinsville police station in Kentucky. Five adults and seven children burst out of the vehicles in a panic, demanding help to fend off small alien creatures who had arrived in a spaceship and were attacking their farmhouse. Two of the adults, Elmer Sutton and Billy Ray Taylor, claimed that short, dark figures had been repeatedly popping up at their windows and doorways and they'd been forced to open gunfire upon the assumed extraterrestrials. Four local police officers attended the scene along with five state troopers, four military police officers and three deputy sheriffs in order to prevent a possible gun fight, but when they arrived at the farm, near Kelly in Christian County, there was no trace of any spacecrafts or creatures, just evidence of the gunfire the men had admitted to. The next day, the farmhouse was found abandoned with neighbours reporting that the residents had claimed the beings had returned in the early hours of the morning. The aliens were described as goblin-like creatures, up to 1.2-metres (four-feet) tall with large pointed ears, claw-like hands, yellow glowing eyes and scrawny legs.

During the making of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, J Allen Hynek – who was working as consultant on the movie – told Spielberg about this curious encounter in Christian County, Kentucky. This inspired Spielberg to write a treatment that became an action horror script entitled *Night Skies*. The invaders in *Night Skies* included a friendly alien named Buddy and Scar, a particularly nasty goblin with a long bony finger that would glow – sound familiar? When Spielberg changed his mind and wanted to emulate the same vibes as *Close Encounters* for his new alien flick, he enlisted scriptwriter Melissa Mathison to rewrite *Night Skies* and it become an entirely different story – one about a young boy and his close encounter with a long-fingered alien who just wants to return home: *E.T The Extra-Terrestrial*. Spielberg reused numerous other elements of the *Night Skies* script in *Gremlins* and *Poltergeist*, replacing aliens with Mogwai and ghosts respectively, but retaining the family-under-siege narrative in both.

Above: Hynek (right) told Spielberg (middle) about the Hopkinsville case, inspiring three great movies

Below: A real life close encounter helped to develop one of pop culture's most iconic friendly aliens



"Five adults and seven children burst out of the vehicles in a panic, demanding help to fend off small alien creatures"

© Getty; Alamy

MONSTROUS MARTIANS

+ Aliens, along with artificial intelligence, have to be the ultimate monster for a post-scientific world.

As a result, little green men have joined the likes of vampires, werewolves, witches and ghosts as a staple antagonist of horror fiction. But while more and more benevolent aliens were introduced during the 20th century, there was also an influx of monstrous Martians who terrorised cinema-goers for decades – and they didn't need their whole army behind them, either. Here are some of the most terrifying fictional alien species we can only hope and pray never invade our Earth...

POD PEOPLE
(INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, 1978)

+ These parasites arrive looking like beautiful, exotic flowers, but once they have you in their botanical grip, they will duplicate and replace you with an identical-looking clone devoid of any humanity.

THE THING
(THE THING, 1982)

+ Another body-snatching alien, this one can perfectly imitate and assimilate other life forms. The result is that anybody could be an alien, even your closest friend. If that's not scary enough, it is also capable of warping itself (and the human body) into some seriously disturbing shapes when its found.

XENOMORPH
(ALIEN, 1979)

+ This silent, insect-like creature bleeds acid and can disguise itself through thermal imaging. Not only that, but they are parasitic – so if you aren't an adult's lunch, one of its vile spawn dubbed a "face hugger" will violate your body, use you as an incubator and then burst from your chest.

YAUTJA
(PREDATOR, 1987)

+ This race of warrior aliens travel to other planets to hunt species for sport. While they have the capacity for reason and mercy, they seldom show it. They are giant, muscle-bound, and possess advanced technology, such as invisibility. Generally only target those who are armed and follow a strict code of honour.

> "As a result, little green men have joined the likes of vampires, werewolves, witches and ghosts as a staple antagonist of horror fiction"

Left: Mulder and Scully drew an entire generation into the world of UFO conspiracies

Below: *Men in Black* took a comedic look at alien shenanigans

Clarke's 1951 short story, the film featured pioneering special effects, a scientifically accurate depiction of space flight and gigantic black cuboid alien machine dubbed a Monolith, that is believed to have been created by a highly intelligent race of aliens who strive to help others achieve technological progression.

In 1975, Disney released *Escape To Witch Mountain*, the tale of two Nordic-looking (see page 28), paranormally gifted children who turn out to be aliens who have crashed on Earth after having to escape their dying home planet.

In 1977, Steven Spielberg released *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Rather than featuring an epic battle between Earth and an invading species, the film focused on one family's experience when they encountered a benevolent UFO and the film was responsible for bringing ufology to mainstream attention. The movie's title was derived from J Allen Hynek's Close Encounter system (see page 76), and the former Project Blue Book professor worked as consultant on the film. *Close Encounters* avoids military intervention and hostile planetary wars and presents UFOs as gigantic colourful, musical toys that we are excited to make contact with.

Mork & Mindy continued the friendly alien 'fish out of water' trope that *My Favorite Martian* featured,

PARASITES

(THEY LIVE, 1988)

+ John Carpenter's take on the reptilian conspiracy (see page 29), these evil aliens take on the appearance of the world's elite, from politicians to actors, brainwashing real humans through the media and then leaving them to rot in their wake.

DEATH ANGELS

(A QUIET PLACE, 2018)

+ These terrifying blind monsters keep suspense high, hunting humans through sound. Your only surefire way to survive? Be silent.

Right: *Independence Day* made an action film out of a familiar 'us vs them' story

Below: *Coneheads* went to show that all families have their quirks – their quirk was that they happened to be aliens

whereby the alien Mork has to learn how to function in human society, and even adds a romantic element to the relationship between alien and human.

ALIEN BUDDIES

In 1982, Spielberg repeated the child-like approach to UFOs he established in *Close Encounters* with *E.T the Extra-Terrestrial*. E.T's similarly-designed spacecraft is piloted by gentle, eco-conscious aliens. It is the human military who are the antagonists in E.T – they are keen to claim the alien as their own, driven by greed and exposing adult humans as spiritually unevolved – a stark contrast to the visiting species. A trend began for cute alien (and other beings) sidekicks during the 1980s. *Explorers* featured a friendly sibling set of aliens who hit it off with a duo of young boys; animated spaceship extraterrestrials called Fix-Its won over the residents of a New York apartment building in *Batteries Not Included*; and in 1986, another film was released that would cast corporate humans in a bad light and see aliens as misunderstood, sympathetic protagonists. *Flight of the Navigator* tells the story of a young boy abducted by benevolent extraterrestrials and his escape from NASA scientists. Like in E.T, the boy befriends and helps these strange intergalactic visitors.

More comedic aliens can be seen in the 1990s who both help and hinder humanity. *Third Rock From the Sun* features four extraterrestrials who land on the "insignificant" planet Earth purely to observe human behaviour and uses the 'fish out of water' trope just as the alien sitcoms had before it. But in 1993 a new show aired on FOX that would change the whole landscape of science fiction television and have an enduring impact on popular culture: *The X-Files*. While the show delved into almost every urban legend, paranormal myth and conspiracy theory going, it was specifically the US government's cover-up of UFOs and extraterrestrial contact, and FBI Agent Fox Mulder's unwavering goal to expose it, that provided the overarching narrative. Running for nine seasons in its initial run, spawning two feature films and returning for a tenth season in 2016 and an 11th in 2018, the series had an unprecedented social influence and remains a cult classic. Its catchphrase, "the truth is out there", has become synonymous with the search for the existence of alien life, with the show introducing otherwise fringe conspiracy theories to a mainstream audience. While *The X-Files* might have been fiction, it danced on the edge of reality, introducing paranormal pseudoscience alongside plausible, scientific explanations offered by Mulder's sceptical partner, Agent Scully. *The X-Files* played with real-life conspiracy theories, with grey aliens ("Colonists") and hybrids featuring alongside government cover-ups and plenty of other paranormal phenomena.

The mid-late 1990s saw a sci-fi resurgence, with *Independence Day* reinventing the invasion movie as a blockbuster action disaster film (featuring classic Earth-destroyer aliens), and *Men In Black* exposing alien conspiracy theories in a tongue-in-cheek manner, contrasting with the serious nature of *The X-Files* and offering a whole host of unique alien species, some benevolent and others malevolent. *Starship Troopers* envisioned a futuristic united Earth government whose military are focused on fighting off alien bugs – it's essentially a camp war movie in space. *Mars Attacks!* offered a throwback to the golden age of space invader movies, full of gleeful over-the-top action and humour, while *Coneheads* portrayed its aliens as a quirky all-American family, who just happen to have bizarre-shaped heads (they are from Europe, of course).

By the end of the decade aliens had even infiltrated teen drama shows, such as *Roswell* (1999), which imagined the extraterrestrials who crashed in Roswell in 1947 as paranormally gifted high-school students who were incubated in pods until the 1980s, and now must face human and alien enemies while navigating being, for all intents and purposes, a regular human teenager. It is official, aliens can be anything. Good guys, bad guys, little more than insects… they are the perfect paranormal science fiction being. In fact, they are so adept at shapeshifting through fiction, the conspiracies may well be true – they might already be here!

© Getty; Alamy

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

Did a radio drama of an alien invasion really spark mass panic across the US?

WORDS JESSICA LEGGETT

It was 30 October 1938. The voice of a 23-year-old media prodigy called Orson Welles boomed over the radio, narrating a new episode of his drama series, *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, a series of classic novels adapted for radio. This episode featured a new adaptation of H G Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, a science fiction novel published in 1898. Wells's story told of an invasion of Britain by warmongering Martians and the country's surrender. Welles's innovation, one that would plague him for the rest of his life, was to adapt the novel into a series of breaking news bulletins for radio broadcast, reporting a supposed Martian invasion in real-time on the CBS Radio Network.

Right: The incident propelled Welles to notoriety and would be remembered for the rest of his career

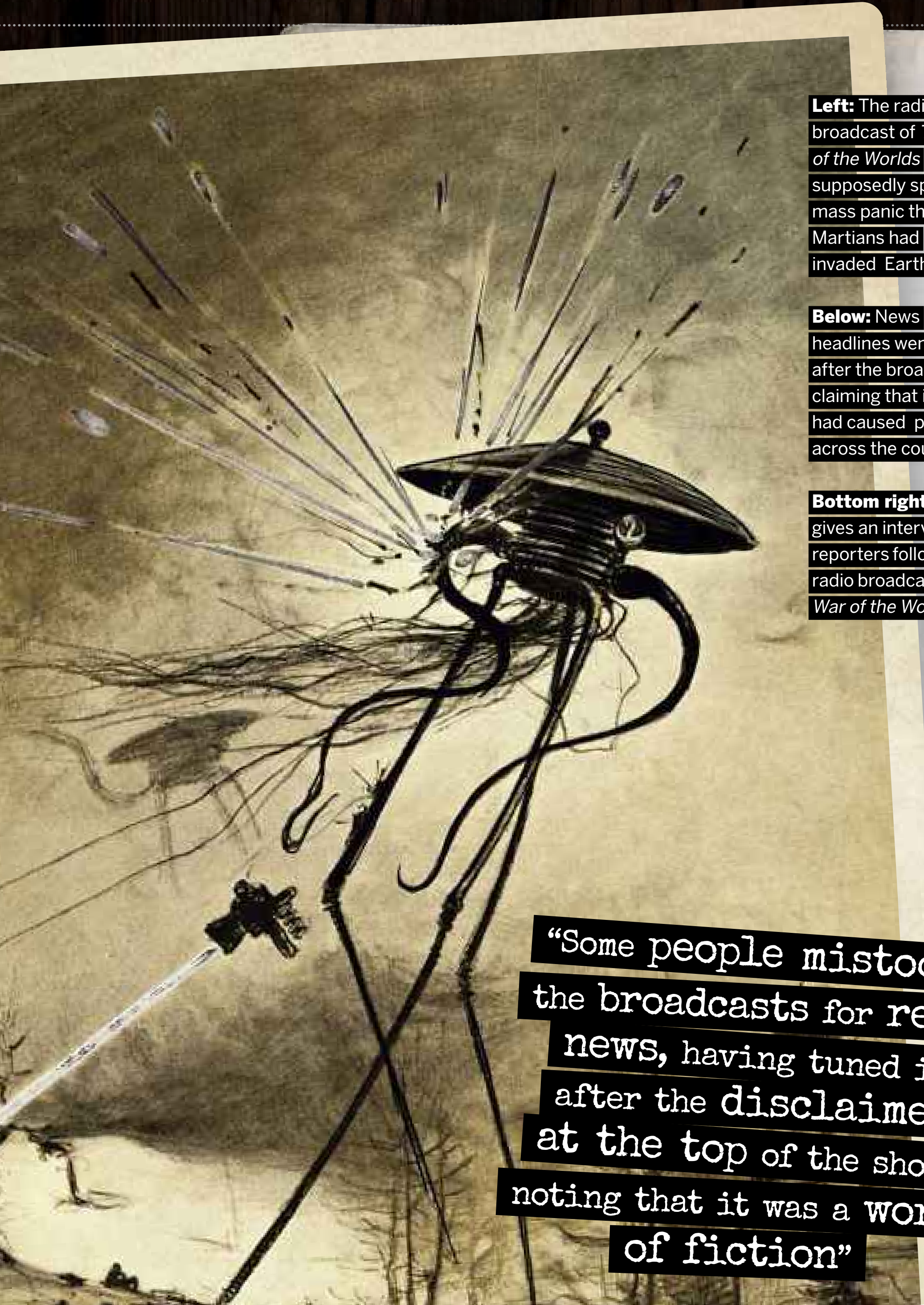
Below: *The War of the Worlds* was adapted into a radio drama by Welles

To make the broadcast more appealing to his audience, Welles changed the story's setting from England to New Jersey. The realism was also heightened by the news bulletins, which interrupted the station's regular music programme and were backed by sound effects.

Radio audiences in the 1930s trusted news broadcast over the radio, and perhaps the tension of the interwar years primed the public for the panic the programme sparked. Added to this was the ignoring of the convention for fictional radio shows to have breaks on the half-hour for station identification, which the lopsided script of *War of the Worlds* – with the break 40 minutes in rather than 30 – failed to deliver. Until this point, it was just breaking news bulletins that would not have these breaks. Therefore, some people mistook the broadcasts for real news, having tuned in after the disclaimer at the top of the show noting that it was a work of fiction, and called into radio stations, newspaper offices and the police worried about the situation.

Journalists quickly set about reporting the panic, creating an almost mythical aura around the broadcast. During the Depression, radio had emerged as a serious competitor to newspapers, and therefore it benefitted newspapers to characterise radio as deceptive and irresponsible, in an attempt to discredit it at a time when more Americans were turning to radio to find out the news.

Waking up on Halloween, Welles found his face plastered on newspapers across the country as



Left: The radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* supposedly sparked mass panic that Martians had invaded Earth

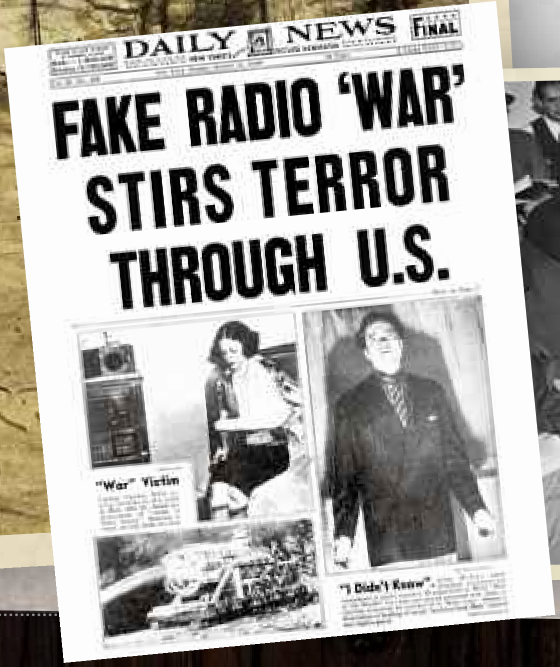
headlines focused on the panic his performance had supposedly caused. With reporters demanding an explanation from CBS and the members of the Mercury Theatre, Welles issued a public apology for the incident, although he was confused as to how his performance was misconstrued: "Despite my deep regret over any misapprehension that our broadcast might have created among some listeners, I am even more bewildered over this misunderstanding in the light of an analysis of the broadcast itself".

In recent times, the story of the mass hysteria has been reviewed, and insights into the production of the broadcast shed new light on the reality of that fateful night. In a 1960 court deposition, Welles, suing CBS to be rightfully acknowledged as the play's co-author, recalled that even before deciding on the novel to be used as the basis, he had "conceived the idea of doing a radio broadcast in such a manner that a crisis would actually seem to be happening and would be broadcast in such a dramatized form as to appear to be a real event taking place".

The broadcast was made more believable still by some of the actors' methods. Frank Readick, who played the reporter witnessing the invasion, had meticulously studied the reporting of the Hindenburg disaster and perfectly replicated announcer Herbert Morrison's panicked tones. Welles played into this too, casting Kenneth Delmar, an actor known to Welles as able to produce a pitch-perfect impression of then-president Franklin D Roosevelt, to give an address outlining the government's plan to defeat the invading Martians. Delmar was asked to make his character sound presidential, carefully circumventing the ban on impersonating the president to not mislead listeners.

Ultimately, the situation not only showed the influence that radio could have, but it also showed how influenced audiences could be. It demonstrated the power of the mass media in sensationalising a story and is considered today as a pivotal moment in broadcasting history – an example of how the line between fiction and reality can be blurred by the press.

"Some people mistook the broadcasts for real news, having tuned in after the disclaimer at the top of the show noting that it was a work of fiction"



DAILY NEWS FINAL

FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.

"War" Victim

"I Didn't Know"

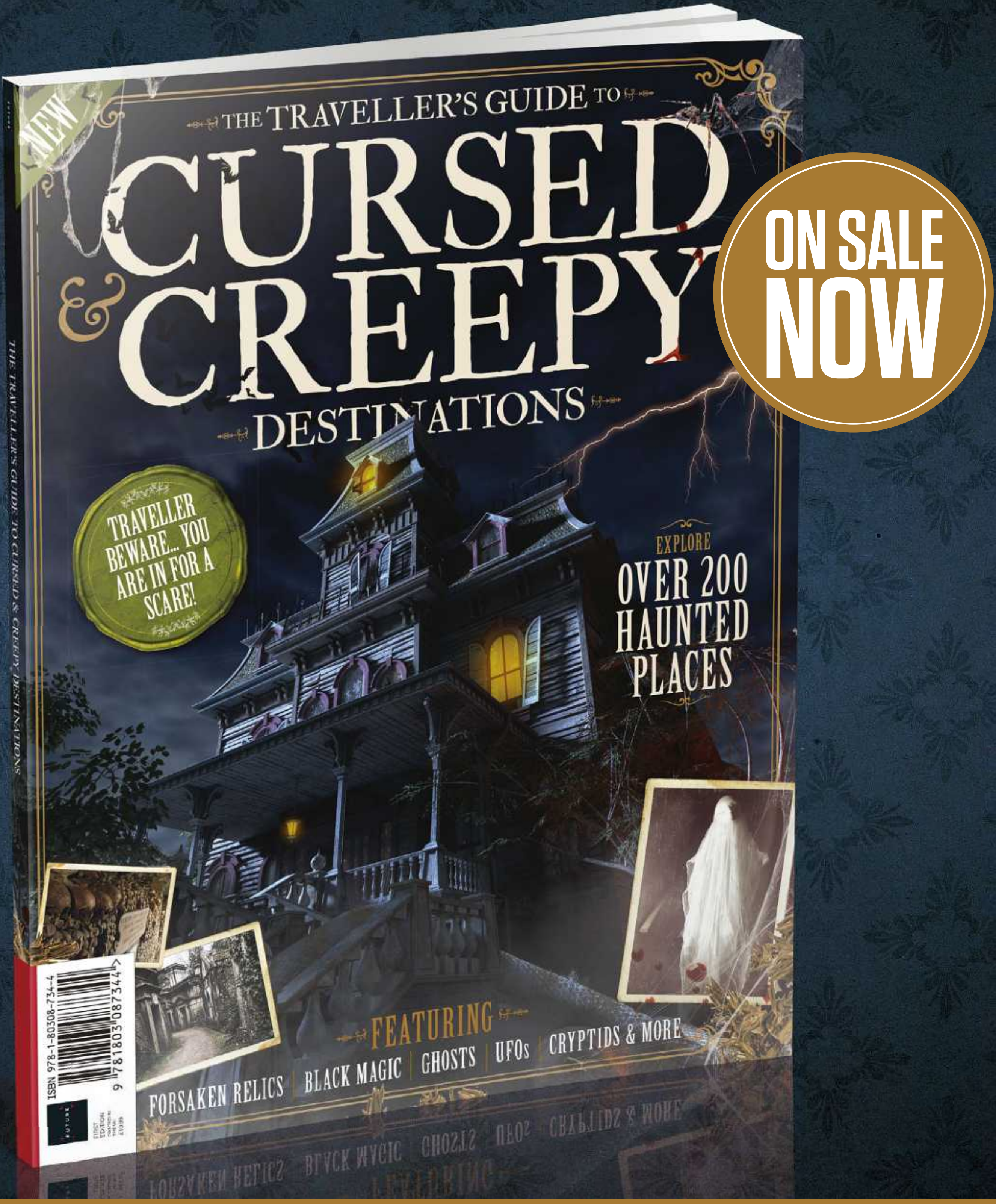
Below: News headlines went wild after the broadcast, claiming that it had caused panic across the country

Bottom right: Welles gives an interview to reporters following the radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*

© Getty

DELVE INTO THE WORLD'S DARKEST PLACES

From sinister abandoned asylums and forests infested with phantoms to houses once home to homicidal maniacs and macabre museums, this bucket list of spine-tingling sites are not for the faint of heart!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Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk
For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

GPSR EU RP (for authorities only)
eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317, Tallinn, Estonia
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The Ultimate Guide to UFOs Third Edition (AHB7272)
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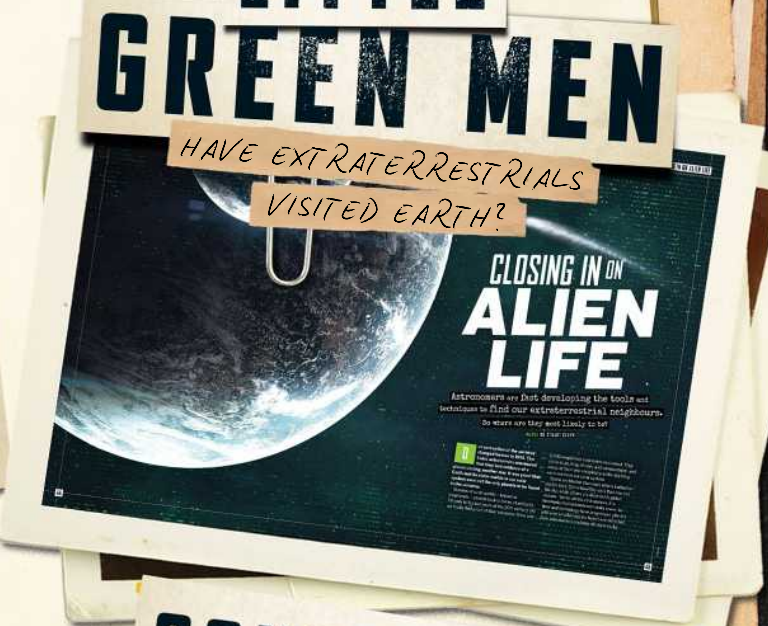
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Astronomers are fast developing the tools and techniques to find our extraterrestrial neighbours. So where are they most likely to be?

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

FROM MEN IN BLACK TO DULCE BASE

WILL SALVATION COME FROM SPACE?

Despite the name, UFO cults don't worship unidentified flying objects themselves, but their alleged alien pilots feature heavily in the doctrine and belief systems of these offbeat religions

HEAVEN'S GATE

WE WANT TO BELIEVE

HOW SPACE HAS SPAWNED RELIGIONS

CLASSIFIED

WHAT ARE THEY HIDING?

If the truth is out there then governments are doing their level best to hide it - at least according to these conspiracy theories

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